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Denison's Royalty Plays

Am I Intruding?

by

Frederick G. Johnson

T. S. Denison & Company
Publishers · Chicago
Price 50 Cents

Monograph

Denison's Royalty Plays

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T. S. Denison & Company, Publishers
623 S. Wabash Ave. CHICAGO

129
1720

AM I INTRUDING?

AM I INTRUDING?

A Mystery Comedy in Three Acts

"Of which, if thou be a severe, sour-complexioned man, then I here disallow thee to be a competent judge."—*Izaak Walton.*

BY

FREDERICK G. JOHNSON

AUTHOR OF

"Fifty-Fifty," "Mary's Millions," etc.

CHICAGO

T. S. DENISON & COMPANY

PUBLISHERS

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AM I INTRUDING?

A PLAY FOR SIX MEN AND SIX WOMEN

CHARACTERS.

(*In the order in which they first appear or speak.*)

MRS. HASTINGS.....*The Housekeeper*
BLAIR HOOVER.....*The Adventurer*
EARNEST RATHBURN.....*Jane's Secretary*
MARJORY VARE.....*The Elder Daughter*
DICKIE WALDRON.....*A Romanticist*
MONA.....*The Maid*
HORACE VARE.....*The Father*
VIOLET VARE.....*The Younger Daughter*
PETER.....*Devoted to Vi*
DORA.....*A Friend of Vi's*
GERALD MAYS.....*Jerry, from Sage Creek*
JANE.....*Vare's Niece*

PLACE—*The entire action of the play occurs in the living room of the Vare home on Long Island, at some distance from New York City.*

TIME—*The Present.*

TIME OF PLAYING—*About Two Hours.*

SYNOPSIS OF ACTS.

ACT I. *A spring morning. Jerry intrudes.*
ACT II. *Late the next day. Jerry takes a hand.*
ACT III. *The following morning. Jerry untangles the thread.*

COSTUMES AND CHARACTERISTICS.

Mrs. Hastings—About 38. She always has about her an air of mystery and restraint. Neither pretty nor homely, just a woman who has lost the bloom of youth, has become embittered by misfortune and who yields to temptation when urged by flattery. But she has the courage to speak up when defied by her confederate. Costume throughout, a black house dress, suited to her employment.

Hoover—About 40. An adventurer who tries to pose as a gentleman, but when irritated shows his true nature. Selfish, heartless, thinking only of his own interests. Costume, conventional business clothes. May wear one suit throughout, or change after Act I.

Earnest—About 24. A very sober, serious-minded person of the "highbrow" type. Speaks with Bostonian drawl. Wears shell-rimmed spectacles or Oxford eyeglasses with heavy black ribbon attached, and has a manner of looking over the tops of his glasses with a startled expression when anything happens. His hair is parted in the middle and brushed down flat. Costume, plain dark suit of conservative design, black windsor tie, black shoes and socks. May change after Act I if desired.

Margie—About 22. A sweet, natural, lovable girl, who can be serious or full of fun as the occasion demands. Costumes, Act I, any pretty, informal dress, changing to simple evening gown; Act II, another informal dress, changing to more elaborate evening gown and wrap; Act III, same evening gown and wrap as Act II.

Dickie—About 26. Likes to pose as a man of the world, but he has been somewhat spoiled by society,

especially the feminine portion thereof. A really likeable young fellow. Has a tiny mustache. His clothing is a bit extreme in fashion, but is well within the bounds of good taste. Costumes, norfolk jacket and white trousers, or golf suit, or any outing togs, for Act I; neat business suit, changing to full dress, for Act II; full dress for Act III.

Mona—About 20. A dashing little French maid, with a dashing little French accent and a dashing little French manner. Not bold, just pert. Costume, conventional maid costume of black, with white collar, cuffs and lace cap; black satin slippers and silk hose; in Act III, changes to attractive street suit and hat.

Vare—About 50. An affectionate father, but distracted by business worries. A well-groomed business man, with gray-streaked hair or gray wig. May have gray mustache. Costume, neat business clothes. May wear one suit throughout, or change after Act I.

Vi—About 17. Margie's lively and slangy kid sister, whose attempt to appear sophisticated is on a par with Peter's quest for dignity. She considers herself fully grown, and wishes everyone to regard her in the same light. Costumes, a pretty, informal summer dress for Act I; another informal dress for Act II, changing to evening gown and cloak; same evening gown and cloak for Act III.

Peter—About 17. A schoolboy who takes the world, including himself, very, very seriously. His most unhappy moments are when his tremendous dignity is wounded. Someone seems to have told him that it is bad form to act naturally. His clothing follows the trend of the college freshman. Costumes,

extreme sports clothes for Act I, with the same or other outing clothes for Act II, changing to full dress or tuxedo; same evening clothes for Act III.

DORA—About 16. Just as pretty, but not so vivacious as Vi, nor so convinced of her sophistication. The harmless baby-doll type, with a fetching lisp. Costumes, Act I, pretty, informal dress; another informal dress for Act II, changing to evening gown and wrap; same evening gown and wrap for Act III.

JERRY—About 24. Appears as an awkward, raw-boned rustic lad, full of fun and doing his best to "fit in" with people of social experience. Frank, honest, good-hearted and fearless. Healthy sunburned make-up, with red crop or country boy wig. Costume for Act I, an unpressed, countrified suit of checked or striped material, tight fitting and short in arms and legs; loud socks, yellow shoes; celluloid collar and glaring tie; out-of-fashion straw hat, or brown derby; carries old fashioned valise or telescope; same for Act II, changing to a dress suit that is oversized enough to be funny; same for Act III, changing to very neat business suit and discarding wig.

JANE—About 23. A very serious young woman, as earnest as Earnest himself. She feels that she has a mission in life. Her appearance is rather sober, but she is by no means a "frump." Wears shell-rimmed spectacles, and has her hair plainly but becomingly done. Costume throughout, shirtwaist and skirt, plain, but neither unattractive nor grotesque.

(*Note*: See that MARGIE, VI and DORA have dresses that offer sufficient contrast, yet harmonize well for the stage pictures.)

PROPERTIES.

HOOVER—Fountain pen, checkbook, wallet containing notes, handkerchief.

EARNEST—Armful of books of different sizes, including several large ones, notebooks, papers, etc., two pieces of cord, handkerchief, watch.

MONA—Evening wraps for Margie, Vi and Dora in Act II. Traveling bag.

VARE—Watch, fountain pen, checkbook, stocks.

PETER—Engagement ring, cigarets, matches.

DORA—An opened letter.

JERRY—Valise, automatic, coil of rope, handkerchief, newspaper, notes, check, letter.

STAGE PROPS—Table, with large spread, books, etc. Two straight chairs. Large easy chair. Settee, with a few cushions. Japanese screen. Phonograph with dance record. Breakfast bell off stage. These are the essentials; additional furnishings ad lib.

CONCERNING THE PLAY.

(The following paragraphs may be useful in preparing an advance writeup of the play for your local newspapers. Your cast of characters, place and date of performance, etc., should be added.)

"Am I Intruding?" is a thoroughly modern comedy causing laughter galore, based on a mystery plot that holds the attention from start to finish and comes out quite differently from what anyone in the audience is expecting. There is really no big star part, all the people in the cast having an unusual opportunity to shine as individuals.

The action hinges around the efforts of Horace Vare, a wealthy business man, to keep from being frozen out of the Bluebird Motors Corporation, in which he is a heavy stockholder. Blair Hoover, an

adventurer, acquires some notes of Vare's when the latter is short of cash, and threatens to ruin him unless he will sell his Bluebird stock at a low figure.

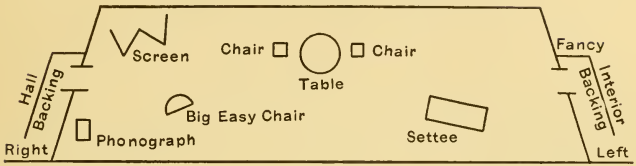
Vare has been forced into a tight corner financially when Jerry, eccentric son of his comrade of years ago, appears on the scene. Jerry is a regular rustic tornado, and sets out not only to save the stock for Vare, but to win Vare's daughter for himself. Jerry arrives fresh from Sage Creek, by heck, and is about as much at home in the palatial Vare household as a bull in a china shop.

Besides his whirlwind courtship of Margie, Jerry furnishes much amusement for Margie's slangy young sister, Vi, and the latter's bosom friend, Dora, who is "tho dithcouraged over her love affairth." And he upsets the stately demeanor of Vare's studious niece, Jane, and her serious-minded secretary, Earnest. Meanwhile he wins the admiration of Dickie Waldron, who is busy raising a moustache, and of Peter, Vi's schoolboy sweetheart. He flees from the winning wiles of Mona, the pert little French maid, and keeps his eagle eye on Mrs. Hastings, the mysterious woman in black.

Throughout the three acts of "Am I Intruding?" the rapid action brings about one situation after another in which are mingled thrills and laughs. The comedy is natural, not forced, the characters have the little mannerisms which we see about us in everyday life, and the interest is well sustained to the final curtain. Every character in the play is worthy of a star actor.

"Am I Intruding?" brings a new and distinctive type of play into the amateur theatrical field.

Scene Plot.



STAGE DIRECTIONS.

Up stage means away from footlights; *down stage*, near footlights. In the use of *right* and *left*, the actor is supposed to be facing the audience.

AM I INTRUDING?

THE FIRST ACT.

The action of the entire play takes place in the living room of the Vare home on Long Island, at some distance from New York City. The people who dwell here are obviously a family of refinement and considerable means. All the furniture and fittings are of the best quality, and well chosen. But there is nothing stilted or formal. It is a real home.

There are two doors, one at the right leading in from the hallway entrance, and another at the left leading on into the rest of the house. If the scenery is equipped with practical windows, they are in the rear wall, and they afford a view of an informal garden landscape or of any other pleasant rural scene.

The essential furnishings of the room include a living-room table up center, with a straight chair on either side. A cabinet phonograph stands against the right wall. A large easy chair is down right of center. A settee is down left, and a Japanese screen stands near the corner up right. The setting may be completed with additional furniture, rugs, draperies and decorations at the discretion of the stage director and in accordance with the facilities at hand.

The rise of the curtain reveals MRS. HASTINGS *and* HOOVER *on the stage.* MRS. HASTINGS *stands near the right door, rather uneasily looking off right.* HOOVER *sits impatiently on the right arm of the settee.*

MRS. HASTINGS.
(*Looking off right.*)
They have gone. (*Comes toward center.*)

Rising from behind the screen up right, the serious, bespectacled face of EARNEST *comes into view. He is hiding, and listening intently.*

HOOVER.
(*Mysteriously.*)
If what you tell me is true, I can see a future where you will never have to work again. You can lay aside forever the garb of a housekeeper. We will be married—

(EARNEST *disappears behind the screen.*)

MRS. HASTINGS.
(*Hastily interrupting* HOOVER.)
Sh! Not so loud. (*Crosses, looks off right, and returns to* HOOVER.) They mustn't suspect that you are not my brother. I tell you, my cousin James is the inventor, and the Bluebird Motor Corporation is going to install it. It will revolutionize the automobile business and make a fortune for all the stockholders. Every penny's worth of stock is being bought up by those in the know. Vare has invested nearly all his money in the stock. I heard him tell a friend over the phone, the day he first heard that the company was going under. He doesn't know a thing about this new improvement. I'm sure you could buy his stock cheap. He's pressed for money to meet some notes due very soon. But you must be careful. Don't rouse his suspicions.

HOOVER.
(*Easily.*)
Trust me. If I can get my hands on this stock,

our fortune is made. You are a trump, little woman, to put me next to this. And we *will* get that stock.

MRS. HASTINGS.

We must, by hook or by crook.

HOOVER.

Yes, if I have to buy up his notes and hold them over his head.

MRS. HASTINGS.

But you'll have to work fast. The news of the new invention may leak out, and then there'd be no hope of buying him out.

(EARNEST *is again seen listening.*)

HOOVER.

(*Rising.*)

No danger of his hearing anything. The wise ones will keep it dark until all stock is bought up.

(MARGIE *laughs off left.*)

MRS. HASTINGS.

(*Going right.*)

Sh! Let us go. That is Vare's daughter coming this way. Try to see Vare at once; the sooner the better.

HOOVER.

(*Going with her.*)

I've already spoken to him.

(MRS. HASTINGS *and* HOOVER *both exeunt right.* EARNEST *exits quickly after them.*)

MARGIE *runs on gayly from the left, followed by* DICKIE. *She sits on the settee.*

DICKIE.

(*Standing back of settee.*)

You do like me, don't you, Marjory?

MARGIE.

Well, I do and I don't. In some ways I like you. And in some ways I do not.

DICKIE.

In what way do you like me? That's the interesting part.

MARGIE.

Well—you have nice eyes.

DICKIE.

(*Kidding.*)

Oh, goodness! Honestly, now (*leaning over settee*), don't you like my entire face?

MARGIE.

Will you change it if I don't?

DICKIE.

I'd try mighty hard.

MARGIE.

(*Giggling.*)

I love that dear little mustache.

DICKIE.

(*In mock seriousness.*)

Oh, don't kid the mustache. That's serious. I have been very devoted to that since it first began to show signs of beauty. I have carefully trained and cared for it. No one knows the hours, the days, and weeks of watchful waiting. Why, a father never loved his first child as I love this bit of spinach. No, Margie, don't kid the mustache.

MARGIE.

(*Laughing.*)

Dickie, you're a scream.

DICKIE.

It's your fault.

MARGIE.

Mine?

DICKIE.

You make me that way.

MARGIE.

(*Shrugging.*)

Oh, don't blame me.

DICKIE.

Really, I'm serious. (*Sits beside her.*)

MARGIE.

(*Scoffingly.*)

Impossible.

DICKIE.

I'll convince you. (*Starts to put his arm around her.*)

MARGIE.

(*Jumping up.*)

No, you won't. (*Runs back to settee.*)

DICKIE.

(*Slapping his hand.*)

Naughty hand! I told you to behave.

MARGIE.

(*Leaning over back of settee.*)

Dickie, I—

MONA *enters from the left.*

MONA.

Pardon, Meess Marjory. I did not understan'. Shall eet be ze blue or ze white gown for zis evening?

MARGIE.

Oh, the white one, Mona. (*Or whatever gown she will wear.*)

MONA.

Merci, mademoiselle. (*Exits left.*)

DICKIE.

(*After watching* MONA *go.*)

What were you saying?

MARGIE.

I don't know. What *was* I saying?

DICKIE.

You said, "Dickie, I—" just like that, and I felt that I was on the verge of some great confidence.

MARGIE.

(*Laughing.*)

Oh, yes, I remember. I was just going to say, Dickie, I— (*again leans over settee*) I do like you, in spite of the spinach.

DICKIE.

Ah! (*Takes her hands and brings them over his shoulders.*) Now I shall enjoy the week-end here. (*Turns and looks at her.*) How much do you like me?

MARGIE.

(*Playfully.*)

How much do *you* like *me?*

DICKIE.

(*Romantically.*)

I like you so well that without your presence life is one awful void. The sun shines in vain, and the moon—

MARGIE.

(*Laughing.*)

That's just what you said to Sylvia Deering. You'll have to change your line. Learn something new. You're getting stale. (*He tries to interrupt,*

but she goes on.) There's no novelty any more when we girls compare notes. (*Looks at him quizzically for a moment.*) You're an awful flirt, Dickie—but you a r e good fun.

DICKIE.
(*Distressed.*)
But Marjory, you *are* the only girl—I swear!

MARGIE.
(*Puts her hand over his mouth and quotes, laughingly.*)
"Full merrily the bumblebee doth sing, till he hath lost his honey and his sting." Mr. Shakespeare.

VARE *enters right. He is plainly nervous and annoyed.*

VARE.
Marjory.

MARGIE.
(*Quickly starting back.*)
Yes, dad.

VARE.
(*Rather distantly.*)
How are you, Mr. Waldron.

DICKIE.
(*Who has risen.*)
Fine, thank you, Mr. Vare.

VARE.
Marjory, I would like a few words with you.

DICKIE.
Oh,—er—excuse me. (*Exits right.*)

VARE.
Why did you invite that fellow here for the week-end?

MARGIE.

Why, dad! Because I wanted him.

VARE.

I don't like him.

MARGIE.

Why?

VARE.

He is wild and no-account.

MARGIE.

Oh, dad, no more so than most boys nowadays. You know things have changed since you were a boy.

VARE.

Indeed they have. Well, I'd rather you didn't encourage him. You can do much better.

MARGIE.

But dad—

VARE.

(*Sharply.*)

Let him alone.

MARGIE.

You're as cranky as a bear lately, dad. What in the world is the matter with you? Business going wrong?

VARE.

(*Uncomfortably.*)

Don't ask questions; nothing to worry over. You wouldn't understand, anyway.

MARGIE.

(*Wistfully.*)

Perhaps I might. (*Puts her arm through his.*)

VARE.

(*With an effort.*)

Run along, enjoy yourself. It's nothing—noth-

ing at all. (*She starts to go right.*) Oh, I forgot to tell you. The son of an old friend of mine will be in on the two-thirty. (*Looks at watch.*) The train's in now. I've sent the car to meet him.

MARGIE.

Well, for pity's sake, dad, how absent-minded you are! (*Eagerly.*) How old is he? What is he like? Tell me something about him.

VARE.

Oh, he's about twenty-four years old, and something of a simp, I imagine.

MARGIE.

A simp?

VARE.

I haven't seen his father for fifteen years. At that time the boy Gerald was a little shaver with long curls and a Little Lord Fauntleroy suit. That's all I know. My old friend wrote me that he had business in the city and that Gerald would come here for a few days. So you must be nice to him, for I am indebted to his father for many favors in the old days when we were chums.

MARGIE.

(*Sniffing.*)

Lovely prospect, I must say; a doodle-wit on my hands.

VARE.

Well, I expect he'll be an improvement over the Dickie boy you're so infatuated with.

MARGIE.

Oh, I'm *not* so infatuated with anybody—excepting my old dad. (*Puts her arms around his neck.*)

VARE.

(*Smiles, well pleased.*)

Buncombe, you rascal!

MARGIE.

It isn't. But I will be nice to him. You say his name is Gerald?

VARE

Yes, Gerald Mays.

MARGIE.

(*Simpering.*)

Gerald. Oh (*does affected walk*), mercy! (*Laughs.*) I suppose he'll be the last word in correct manners. Oh, I do despise a fashion-plate man.

VARE.

Remember what I tell you. You must do all you can to make his stay pleasant. It's for his father's sake.

MARGIE.

I'll do my best, dad. I wonder if he still wears his hair in curls. (*Laughs.*)

VARE.

Behave yourself.

MARGIE.

Well, bye-bye, daddy-duck—and for pity's sake, cheer up. (*Exits gayly, left. Changes to evening gown for next entrance.*)

(VARE *crosses left, looks after* MARGIE *and shakes his head despondently.*)

HOOVER *enters right.*

HOOVER.

Good afternoon, Mr. Vare.

VARE.

Oh, how are you, Mr. Hoove.

HOOVER.

Mr. Vare, I have been thinking that over, and if you let me have that stock cheap enough, I'll take a chance.

VARE.

If I thought there were a chance, I'd try to hold them myself. But—I must have money to meet notes due in a few days. So I may as well unload if you want to take the gamble.

HOOVER.

Well, yes. Something may come of it, and I can wait. I'll take a chance.

EARNEST *enters right and listens, standing in the doorway.*

HOOVER.

(*Continues.*)

I'll give you a check now. (*Takes out check book.*) Is the price we fixed this morning O. K.? Have you the stock with you? (*Takes out fountain pen and writes check.*)

VARE.

Yes, I got it from the vault this morning. (*Takes papers from pocket.*) I hate to let it go—but circumstances force me to, so—

EARNEST.

(*Coming between the men quickly, speaks excitedly.*)

Really, Mr. Vare, pawdon me. You must come with me quickly. Theyah is not a moment to lose. (*Takes* VARE'S *arm excitedly and pulls him up right.*)

VARE.

What's the matter?

EARNEST.

Youah daughtah! Come, come at once. (*Pulling*

him right.) On my word, hasten, hasten! (*Hurries* VARE *off and they exeunt, right.*)

HOOVER.

(*Disgusted.*)

Confound it! I almost had them. I could choke that imbecile. What's the trouble, I wonder. (*Looks off right.*)

MONA *enters left, and sees* HOOVER.

MONA.

(*Coyly.*)

Oh, you keed!

HOOVER.

(*Turning quickly.*)

Hello, Mona.

MONA.

How you like eet, eh?

HOOVER.

Pretty exciting.

MONA.

You make eet, non?

HOOVER.

You bet. Come here.

MONA.

Mais non! Nossing doing. Sh! (*Looks off right.*) Here come ze tabby cat. Me, on my way. (*She exits right, passing—*)

MRS. HASTINGS, *who enters right.*

MRS. HASTINGS.

(*Quickly, to* HOOVER.)

Well, did you get it?

HOOVER.

No. That addle-pated secretary of the four-eyed story writer came in and dragged him away. And I

almost had my hands on the stock, too. Blast the luck! (*Crosses down center.*)

MRS. HASTINGS.

He was going to let you have it?

HOOVER.

Yes.

VARE *enters right, stops at the door and listens.*

MRS. HASTINGS.

Well, it's all right. He'll be back.

HOOVER.

I'd feel better if I had that stock in my pocket. Why, it's the easiest trick I ever turned. He's pressed for money, and he was all ready to hand it over like a baby—

VARE.

(*Coming forward.*)

Well, Mr. Hoover?

HOOVER.

(*Startled.*)

Oh, hello. What was the trouble?

VARE.

My daughter, Violet, got a caterpillar down her back and fainted. But why the secretary should have come for me is amusing. The tragedy happened half an hour ago and he just wanted to tell me about it.

(MRS. HASTINGS *exits left.*)

HOOVER.

(*Laughs.*)

He's an idiot.

VARE.

(*Musingly.*)

Queer fellow. My niece, Jane, only engaged him to-day. He came down from the city on the noon

train in answer to her advertisement in the paper.

EARNEST *enters, right, with armful of books, crosses and exits left, without interrupting the dialogue.*

HOOVER.

Well, Mr. Vare, here's the check.

VARE.

(*Quietly.*)

Mr. Hoover, I've changed my mind. We'll let that transaction wait.

HOOVER.

(*Annoyed.*)

I can't wait. I leave to-morrow.

VARE.

You seem in a hurry.

HOOVER.

Not at all. But I don't like to be made a fool of. I've made out a check for the amount you ask, and here it is.

VARE.

(*Quietly.*)

Tear it up. I've changed my mind.

(*Pause, while the men look at each other.*)

HOOVER.

(*Angrily.*)

Very well! (*Exits quickly, right.*)

(VARE *crosses up right, and looks after* HOOVER. VIOLET *laughs off right.* VARE *exits slowly, left.*)

VI *runs on from the right, followed by* DICKIE.

DICKIE.

(*As he enters.*)

Listen, Vi. Wait a minute. Delay.

VI.

(*Laughingly.*)

Um—delays are dangerous, old dear.

DICKIE.

Come here (*catches her hand*), you wise little flaplet.

VI.

Oh, say, Dickie old dear, don't get troublesome. And if you're through with my lily white hand I'll take it back. I may have to earn my living with it after I'm married.

DICKIE.

(*Poetically.*)

Heaven forbid that this fair hand should be used for heavier work than scattering roses on life's pathway.

VI.

Buttercups and daisies! Your tongue just drips those sweet nothings, doesn't it?

DICKIE.

Are you spoofing me?

VI.

Far be it from such, Dickie. I'll take you seriously if it's the last thing I do.

DICKIE.

That's right. I yearn to be understood.

VI.

Are you taking anything for it?

DICKIE.

(*Laughs.*)

I'd like to take you.

VI.

You'd be taken in if you did.

DICKIE.

I believe it. But listen, child of my heart—

VI.

Cease, Dickie, cease! Those sweet nothings tickle my ear drums, but they don't register.

DICKIE.

(*Crossing to settee.*)

Park here a few moments, Vi, while I tell you how much I like you.

VI.

I know, Dickie. I know how much.

DICKIE.

You do?

VI.

You like me so well (*quoting*), "that without my presence life would be one awful void, the sun would shine in vain, and the moon—"

DICKIE.

I'm going to kiss you for that. Come on, pay up (*leans over her*).

VI.

(*Putting her hand over his mouth.*)

Nothing doing, Dickie darling. The bank is closed.

DICKIE.

Oh, say!

VI.

Listen, Dickie duck, do you want to earn my undying gratitude?

DICKIE.

You bet. If that's all I can earn.

VI.

All right, old dear. Get the right wave-length and harken. I want you to take dear little Coralie for a run before dinner. The poor child has been in

all day and she just feels miserable. She can't sleep a wink at night without her run. She so loves to be out in the air. I must dress for dinner, but I mustn't neglect my child.

DICKIE.

What on earth are you talking about?

VI.

My precious Coralie.

DICKIE.

How old is Coralie?

VI.

Two years old, the precious.

DICKIE.

Whose is she?

VI.

Mine, you pumpkin.

DICKIE.

Who is Coralie?

VI.

My cute little lambkin, my fuzzy-wuzzy pup.

DICKIE.

(*Turning away.*)

Good evening!

VI.

Will you?

DICKIE.

(*Turning back.*)

No, I'll be darned if I will. You've given me the shock of my sweet young life. I absolutely refuse to go walking with Coralie, if she never sleeps.

VI.

(*Laughing.*)

I knew you didn't love me. Where's Peter?

DICKIE.

Sulking, as usual—because I ran off with you.

VI.

Darling old Peter. But I can't let him be too sure of me. That would be fatal.

DICKIE.

Do you love Peter?

VI.

Of course I do. But he doesn't know it.

DICKIE.

(*Mournfully.*)

How you love to see us poor men suffer.

VI.

Suffer? Piffle.

DICKIE.

(*Looking off left.*)

Here he comes now. I've wasted all my ammunition. I'll retreat. (*Exits right, with funny tragic walk.*)

PETER *enters left. He is wrapped in gloom.*

VI.

Hello, Petie dear. Are you angry with your little V. V.?

PETER.

(*Sullenly.*)

Oh, cut it out! That stuff makes me sick.

VI.

(*Sweetly.*)

Come here, lambkin, and don't spoil a perfectly good party like that.

PETER.

Darn the party!

VI.

Why, Petie! (*Rises and crosses to him.*)

PETER.

(*Fiercely thrusting hands in pockets.*)

I mean it! I wish it was time to go to school. Girls make me tired.

VI.

(*Coaxingly.*)

Oh, Petie.

PETER.

(*Solemnly.*)

Well, they do. All they think about is flirting. When I marry, I'm going to marry a girl that's old enough to have good sense.

VI.

How old is that, Petie?

PETER.

(*Faltering.*)

Well—real old.

VI.

The older they get the sillier they get, so I'm told. Better be careful, old dear. (*Brightly.*) Perhaps you'll wait until I'm the right age?

PETER.

(*With superiority.*)

Some folks never have good sense.

VI.

(*Innocently.*)

Petie, do you mean me?

PETER.

I'm not mentioning any names. (*Takes out cigaret and lights it.*)

VI.

(*Sharply.*)

Peter Stone, you promised me you would stop smoking cigarets.

PETER.
(*Recklessly.*)
I don't care what I do.

VI.
But you promised.

PETER.
That was when we were engaged.

VI.
Do you mean our engagement is broken?

PETER.
(*Darkly.*)
Yes, I do.

VI.
(*Quickly.*)
Peter Stone, I'll sue you for breach of promise. See if I don't.

PETER.
(*With a great show of indifference.*)
Sue away. See if I care.

VI.
(*Beginning to cry.*)
Peter Stone, you just treat me sh—sh—shamefully!

PETER.
(*Explosively.*)
Well, what do you expect? A man can't stand everything!

VI.
(*Weeping.*)
Oh, Peter, don't be so cruel. I just—can't—stand it! (*Crosses into his arms and lays her head on his breast.*) Peter—

PETER.
(*Weakening.*)
Well?

VI.

Put—put your arm around me.

PETER.

Oh, what's the use?

VI.

(*Sobbing.*)

Is our engagement really b-broken?

PETER.

(*Gloomily.*)

Well, you don't care.

VI.

Yes, I d-do, Petie.

PETER.

(*Putting his arm around her.*)

Honest?

VI.

Honest.

PETER.

Well, then—don't cry. I'll forgive you this once, but (*darkly*) if I ever catch you flirting again, it's all off. Remember!

VI.

(*With tears of joy.*)

Y—yes.

DICKIE *enters quickly, right.*

DICKIE.

(*Stopping suddenly.*)

Oh, excuse me. I won't look.

PETER.

(*Peeved.*)

Smart, aren't you! (*Leads* VI *to right door.*)

DICKIE.
(*Amused.*)

Not so very.

VI.
(*Loftily.*)

Don't quarrel on my account, Petie dear. Mr. Waldron is nothing to me.

(VI *makes a funny motion with her hand to* DICKIE *behind* PETER'S *back, and exits with* PETER, *right.* DICKIE *laughs heartily.*)

DORA *enters quickly, left. She has an open letter in her hand.*

DORA.

Oh, Mithter Waldron!

DICKIE.

Greetings.

DORA.
(*Eagerly.*)

Mithter Waldron, do you believe in fate?

DICKIE.
(*Enthusiastically.*)

Well, I should say so. A sudden meeting—and you *know*—you *feel*—it is *she*—the *one*—the onliest one! Have you met your fate?

DORA.

Not yet. I don't think tho. I jutht retheived a letter from Marion Thtone. You know Marion Thtone, don't you?

DICKIE.
(*Imitating* DORA'S *lisp.*)

Marion Thtone?

DORA.

No, I thaid Thtone.

DICKIE.

That's what I said—Thtone.

DORA.

(*Spelling.*)

Eth-t-o-n-e.

DICKIE.

Oh, Stone?

DORA.

Yeth.

DICKIE.

(*Kidding her.*)

Jim Thtone'th thithter?

DORA.

Yeth. I jutht retheived thith letter from her. Sheth to be married on the fifteenth and they have their home all ready to go into when they return from their honeymoon. A thweet little bungalow on the bank of a thtream.

DICKIE.

Oh, thweet daddy!

DORA.

Ithn't that romantic? And they thay he'th wild about her.

DICKIE.

Ith that tho!

VI *enters, right.*

DORA.

I wonder if I'll ever have a real cathe. I'm beginning to be dithcouraged.

VI.

Buck up, old pard. Keep your head above water. There must be a life-saver on the beach some where.

DORA.

(*Aggrieved.*)

Oh, it'th all right for you to joke, with Peter jutht haunting your foot-thepth thinth you were knee high to a toad-thtool. I wonder if I shall ever meet my ideal! (*Sighs.*)

DICKIE.

(*Playfully.*)

Take your time and look me over, Dora.

VI.

(*Cynically.*)

They ain't no such animal.

DORA.

(*Plaintively.*)

How can you, Vi? Why, the world ith full of *wonderful* men!

VI.

Doe, Doe! You've been to the movies again!

DORA.

I have not.

VI.

(*Looking off right, speaks suddenly.*)

Oh, boy! Look who's here. (*Grabs* DORA's *hand.*) Dora—come on!

(*Runs out quickly, right, dragging* DORA *after her.*)

DICKIE.

(*Looking off right.*)

Hello—who's this?

PETER *enters right.*

PETER.

(*With bored annoyance.*)

Girls are so excitable.

DICKIE.

Who's the new arrival, Peter?

PETER.

(*Indifferently.*)

Search me. (*They both look.*)

(VI *and* DORA *laugh heartily, off right.*)

MARGIE *enters, left, in evening gown.*

MARGIE.

What are you looking at, boys?

DICKIE.

(*Still looking.*)

I'll give it up. But I think it's human.

MARGIE.

(*Looking off right.*)

Good gracious! This must be—it can't be—I wonder if it is—Gerald?

PETER.

Gerald?

DICKIE.

Who's Gerald?

(VI *and* DORA *laugh off right. Lively entrance music, as*—)

VI, *holding one of his hands, and* DORA *holding the other, rush in right door with* JERRY *and drag him to the center of the stage. He drops his valise and removes his hat, freeing himself with difficulty from the girls' clutches.*

VI.

(*To all.*)

Allow me to introduce Mr. Gerald Mays, from Sage Creek.

JERRY.

(*Half laughing but embarrassed, stands awkwardly twisting his hat in his hand.*)

Howdy, folks. Am I intruding?

(*Music stops.*)

VI.

Well, I'll tell the world you're not. You're just what we need around here, Jerry.

VARE *enters, left.*

MARGIE.

(*Trying not to laugh.*)

Daddy, this is Gerald.

VARE.

(*Looks in amazement.*)

Are you Gerald Mays?

JERRY.

You betcha. How be ye?

VARE.

(*Half-aside.*)

So this is what old Sandy Mays's son grew up to be. (*Crosses to* JERRY *and holds out his hand.*) You are welcome, my boy.

JERRY.

(*Grasping* VARE'S *hand;* VARE *winces.*)

'Lowed I would be. Pa's comin' up later. He's down to the city—but ye wouldn't ketch me there. I'm pretty spry. I kin play leap-frog to beat old Ned. Used to be the champeen of our village, by heck! But ye got to be greased lightnin' to dodge them tin lizzies in the city. More'n a million a minute, thet's what Jed Green told me. He's ben to

New York. Only he's such a dern liar ye can't alway go on what he says. But I reckon it's pretty dern lively there.

VI.

Y're dern right, old dear.

VARE.

Violet!

VI.

(*Saluting.*)

Present, dad.

VARE.

Girls, you will take care of Gerald.

JERRY.

Oh, thet's all right. I kin take care o' myself. Ain't nothin' to be 'feared of here, by heck.

VI.

(*Takes him by one arm.*)

Come on, Jerry, I'll show you around.

DORA.

(*Grabs his other arm.*)

Oh, no, let m e.

VI.

(*Pulls him one way.*)

No, sir. I will. Come on, Jerry.

DORA.

No, no, Jerry, come with me. (*Jerks him another way.*)

JERRY.

Hold on! Gol dern it, I ain't acquainted with either one nor t'other of ye.

VI.

I'm Violet Vare. They call me Vi, for short.

DORA.

And I'm Dora Dean, Vi'th deareth friend. You

may call me Doe, for short. Come on. (*Pulls him one way.*)

VI.

Come with me. (*Jerks him another way.*)

VARE.

Stop it, girls!

MARGIE.

(*Crossing to* JERRY.)

Jerry, I am Marjory Vare. Will you let me show you around?

JERRY.

(*With an admiring gaze.*)

Gosh! Will I? (*Takes deep breath.*) Excuse me, sisters (*to* VI *and* DORA), but you're too colty fer me to trust until I'm bridle-wise around here. (*To* MARGIE.) Gosh, you're most too pretty fer me to walk alongside of.

MARGIE.

(*Taking his arm.*)

Not at all.

JERRY.

(*Looking at* MARGIE *in admiration.*)

Gosh. (*To* DICK *and* PETER.) Say, fellers, I'm kinda cuttin' you out, ben't I?

DICKIE.

(*Amused.*)

That's all right, Jerry. The best man wins.

JERRY.

Wal, I can't help it.

MARGIE.

(*Laughing.*)

Come on, Jerry. (*Escorts* JERRY *off right.*)

VI.

(*Eagerly.*)

Come on, Doe; come on, boys. Here's a bunch of fun.

VARE.

Here, girls, you must behave.

VI.

Oh, dad, don't be a joy-killer. Come on!

(VI *exits right, dragging* DORA *with her.* DICKIE *and* PETER *follow. All are laughing heartily.*)

JANE *enters, left, followed by* EARNEST, *who carries an armful of books, encyclopedia, dictionary, notes, etc.*

JANE.

What is the excitement, uncle? It is extremely difficult to do one's best work with so much noise and excitement. Perhaps I had better return to my room.

VARE.

I think perhaps you may be interested in the new arrival, Jane. He is what you might call a "type."

JANE.

I am always interested in types. (*Laughter off right.*) Yes, I shall return to my room. Come Earnest. (*Starts left.*)

VARE.

(*Looking off right.*)

Wait; he's coming back.

JERRY *dashes in, right.*

JERRY.

Great State o' Maine! Them gals is worse than a swarm of bees. Gee whilikins, by gum! Don't know if I kin git broke to it or not.

VARE.

Jerry, I want you to meet my niece, Miss Jane Harbison. She writes stories. Jane, this is Gerald Mays, son of a friend of mine.

JANE.

You are welcome, Mr. Mays. (*Gives him her hand.*)

JERRY.

(*Wipes his hand on his trousers and shakes hands with* JANE; *looks her over critically.*)

You ain't as wild as the other gals, be ye?

JANE.

(*Very primly.*)

No, decidedly not.

VARE.

Make yourself at home, Jerry.

JERRY.

(*Heartily.*)

You bet your boots, if them gals'll let me alone. I sort of shy when they's so many in a bunch. I'd like to tackle 'em one at a time, by heck.

VARE.

(*Laughs.*)

You'll get used to them, Jerry. (*Exits left.*)

JERRY.

(*To* JANE.)

Be you married? Is that your husband? (*Points to* EARNEST.)

EARNEST.

(*Startled.*)

My word!

JANE.

My husband? Certainly not. I am not married and never shall be. I am the author of the book

entitled "The Aching Heart," or "How To Cure the Ills of the World." Marriage? I shall never think of anything as selfish as marriage. I shall devote my life, thought and energies to uplifting the world.

JERRY.

Gosh! That sounds like some lift. The young feller is helpin' ye to lift it, ain't he? Don't ye drop them books on yer toes, young feller, 'less ye want to be crippled fer life.

EARNEST.

The ideah!

JANE.

This is my secretary, Mr. Earnest Rathburn.

JERRY.

(*Extending his hand.*)

How are ye, mister. What ye luggin' them books around fer? Ye must be fond of readin'.

JANE.

They are my references.

JERRY.

Ye don't say. No wonder ye hev to wear goggles if ye got to read all that. If I ever tried to read all them words my head would bust right open.

JANE.

Well, I am wasting time, valuable time. Come, Earnest. I'll see you again, young man. I may put you in a book some day.

JERRY.

You git out! I'll have to be flatter than I be to be squeezed inter a book.

JANE.

One moment. You must tell me all about your

life some day, Mr. Mays. I know there is a story in you.

JERRY.
(*Puzzled.*)

In me?

JANE.

Yes.

JERRY.

Gosh, first time I knew they was anything like that in me.

JANE.

There are stories everywhere. Sh! (*Mysteriously.*) You must never breathe it to a living soul, but there is a wonderful story here in this house.

JERRY.
(*Half frightened.*)

Gosh!

JANE.

Yes. Stocks, notes, the mortgage—a mysterious woman in black—a villain.

JERRY.
(*Ready to fight.*)

Where is he?

JANE.
(*Cautiously.*)

Sh! We must be discreet. But you shall help me write my story. Uncle Horace is being hounded by (*dramatically*) that villain, Blair Hoover, who is plotting with that mysterious woman in black.

JERRY.
(*Half frightened.*)

You git out.

JANE.

You must watch them.

JERRY.

Be a detecative?

JANE.

Yes. We must save Uncle Horace. My story *must* have a happy ending. Sh! Be discreet—but watch. Sh! Come, Earnest. (*Exits very mysteriously, left,* EARNEST *following with books.*)

JERRY.

Crazier'n a loon, ain't she, Earnie? (*Pokes* EARNEST *in the ribs.* EARNEST *kicks backward at* JERRY.) You old son-of-a-gun.

EARNEST.

(*As he goes out.*)

Oh, boy! (*Grins knowingly and exits left.*)

MONA *enters, right.*

MONA.

Hello, leetle boy.

JERRY.

(*Startled.*)

Gosh, another one. Hello, sis.

MONA.

Where you come from, eh?

JERRY.

I come from Sage Creek, by gosh.

MONA.

(*Approaching him.*)

You are so fonnee. I like you, leetle boy.

JERRY.

(*Backing away.*)

You git out! I ain't no little boy. I wear suspenders, by heck!

MONA.

(*Coming closer.*)

I sink—I keess you—by heck.

JERRY.

(*Quickly, in alarm.*)

If you do I'll holler. Keep yer distance, sis, if ye don't want to see a runaway. Gosh. It ain't safe here a minute.

MONA.

I go, leetle boy—but I come back. (*Crossing left.*) Oh, you keed! (*Laughs and exits left.*)

JERRY.

(*Looking after her.*)

Oh, you git out! (*Kicks himself.*)

MARGIE *enters right.*

MARGIE.

Hello, Jerry. All alone?

JERRY.

Gosh, no. You're here.

MARGIE.

Come here and sit down, Jerry. (*Crossing, sits on settee.*)

JERRY.

(*Bashfully.*)

You git out.

MARGIE.

(*Pleasantly.*)

Come on.

JERRY.

(*In shy manner.*)

Oh, gosh, I can't.

MARGIE.

(*Laughs.*)

Nothing to be afraid of.

JERRY.

Git out. I know enough to keep away from you vamps.

MARGIE.
(*Amused.*)
Why, Jerry, I'm not a vamp. How absurd.

JERRY.
If you ain't, then I ain't never seen one.

MARGIE.
Where did you ever see one?

JERRY.
In the picture movies. Oh, I'm wise, all right. I've seen 'em and I'm on to all their dodges.

MARGIE.
Really, I'm not a vamp, Jerry. I just want to talk to you. Come on, sit down.

JERRY.
No, sirree. That's the way they dazzle the fellers till they are so plum looney they don't know if they're goin' north or south, and they don't give a dern, either. (*Takes a step toward her.*)

MARGIE.
(*Indicating seat beside her.*)
Come on.

JERRY.
(*Crossing closer.*)
Oh, gosh! I'm slippin'.

MARGIE.
(*Laughs.*)
Come on, Jerry.

JERRY.
(*Going closer.*)
Oh, Bill, I need ashes.

MARGIE.
Come on.

JERRY.

(*Sits beside* MARGIE.)

Gosh all firecrackers!

MARGIE.

You see, I don't bite. (*Laughs.*) You have beautiful red hair, Jerry. (*She gazes at his head. This line and business must be very marked.*)

JERRY.

(*Sliding away.*)

There ye go.

VI *enters right.*

VI.

(*Eagerly.*)

Here he is. Come on, Doe.

DORA *enters, right, after* VI.

VI.

(*Crosses to* JERRY *and grabs him.*)

Come and sit on the veranda, Jerry.

DORA.

(*Grabs him, and they pull him toward right.*)

You sha'n't get away thith time.

JERRY.

(*Resisting.*)

Oh, gosh! Say—quit it, gol dern it.

VI.

Come on, Margie's had you long enough.

DORA.

Come on.

(*The girls gradually drag him toward right door.*)

JERRY.

(*Pretending to struggle.*)

Gosh. Oh, gee—

(Vi *and* Dora *pull* Jerry, *still resisting, off right.*)
Vare *enters, left.*

Vare.

Well, what do you think of him?

Margie.

What do *you* think of him?

Vare.

I never was so astonished in all my life.

Margie.

I'm going to like him. He's very refreshing.

Vare.

He certainly is.

Margie.

(*Looks off right.*)

Here comes that man Hoover. Who is he, anyway? Why does he stay here? I don't like him. He seems always to be sneaking around.

Vare.

Sh! Run away now. I have a little business with Hoover.

Margie.

Business?

Vare.

Run along.

Hoover *enters, right.* Margie *exits quickly, left, ignoring him.*

Hoover.

How about that check now, Mr. Vare?

Vare.

I've told you my decision, Mr. Hoover.

Hoover.

Well, I have bought up your notes. They come

due in two days—pay me the money or let me have the stocks.

VARE.
(*Dismayed.*)

Bought up my notes?

HOOVER.
(*Comfortably.*)

Exactly.

VARE.

Why are you so anxious to get these stocks?

HOOVER.

That's my affair. Remember, two days. (*Exits, left.*)

EARNEST *enters, left.* VARE *sinks into chair and groans.*

EARNEST.

Are you ill, Mr. Vare?

VARE.
(*Rising.*)

No, no; I'm all right. (*Crosses left.*) I'm all right. (*Exits, left.*)

JERRY *rushes on, right.*

JERRY.
(*Out of breath.*)

Oh, gosh. Say, where kin I hide from them gals? (VI *and* DORA *laugh off right.* JERRY *gets excited.*) Gee. Oh, gosh! (*Points to table.*) Pick up them books. (EARNEST *picks up books.* JERRY *snatches cover off table.*) Here, Earnie, cover me with this.

(JERRY *sits in small arm chair at right of table and lays his arms along arms of chair.* EARNEST *quickly covers* JERRY *completely, and fixes his lap to*

look like the seat of a chair; then straightens books, fixes vase on table, etc.)

VI *and* DORA *run on, right.*

DORA.

Where did he go?

VI.

Have you seen Jerry?

(*The above two speeches are given together.*)

EARNEST.

(*Stupidly.*)

Ah—Jerry?

VI.

Come on. (VI *and* DORA *run off, left.*)

EARNEST.

(*Looks off left, then crosses quickly to* JERRY.)

Don't move. Keep quiet. (*Exits quickly, right.*)

HOOVER *enters, left, crosses and looks right.* MRS. HASTINGS *follows* HOOVER *on, left.*

HOOVER.

(*Nervously.*)

That secretary seems to be snooping around everywhere. I meet him every turn I make.

MRS. HASTINGS.

Nonsense. He's just a brainless simpleton. You're getting nervous.

HOOVER.

I'm anxious, that's all. I want those stocks, and Vare may raise the money any minute to meet the notes.

MRS. HASTINGS.

No danger; the notes come due in two days, don't they?

HOOVER.

Yes.

MRS. HASTINGS.

(*Crossing toward chair where* JERRY *is.*)

Well, if there was any way for him to raise the money he would have gotten it long ago. You'll get the stock, never fear. (*Comes to chair.*) Sit down. (HOOVER *crosses to chair left of table.*) I want to tell you—(*Sits, then screams as* JERRY *puts his arms around her waist; struggles out of the chair, and in a fury snatches table cover off* JERRY. HOOVER *jumps up.*)

JERRY.

(*Grins.*)

Am I intruding?

HOOVER.

What the devil does this mean?

JERRY.

Oh, gosh! I was hidin' from the girls and I fell asleep.

MRS. HASTINGS.

You were sleeping?

JERRY.

(*Rubbing his eyes.*)

Yeh.

HOOVER.

(*Grabs him by collar and swings him around to right center.*)

Are you telling the truth?

JERRY.

(*Mad.*)

Gosh ding you! (*Begins to roll up his sleeves.*) You city jay, don't you get gay with me, or I'll step on the gas and take you so fur up the road ye'll

never git back! (*Swings his arms.*) I'll lift ye up and let ye drop so hard ye'll crack all over. Gosh—ding—ye! (*Dances around in a rage.*)

MRS. HASTINGS.

(*After pause for laugh.*)

Let him alone. He hasn't heard anything. Come on. (*Crosses right.*)

(HOOVER *follows her to right.* JERRY *dances around him, swinging his arms, striking burlesque fighting attitudes, etc.*)

HOOVER.

(*Laughs.*)

That's all right, Jerry. I apologize; my mistake. Let's shake hands and be friends. (*Extends his hand.*)

JERRY.

Dern you (*slaps* HOOVER's *hand down*) don't ye poke yer paw at me, dern ye. I'm madder'n a hornet, an' I've got some sting when I git mad. Look out fer me, or you'll soon be so swelled up all over thet yer own ma won't know ye.

MRS. HASTINGS.

Come on. (*Exits, right.* HOOVER *laughs and exits, right, after her.*)

EARNEST *enters, right.*

EARNEST.

Well, Jerry, have you succeeded in discovering a new situation to incorporate in ouah new story?

JERRY.

I don't know what y're sayin', buddy, but ef y're talkin' about the story we're writin', I'll promise ye it ain't goin' to be no comic. It'll have a deep-dyed,

tragedy finish, if that there city jay ever grabs me by the collar again.

MARGIE, DORA *and* VI *all rush on, left, with a scream, and surround* JERRY.

MARGIE.

Here he is.

VI.

Now we have you.

DORA.

He can't ethcape.

(*The above three speeches are given together.*)

JERRY.

Say, gals, ye got me foul. Jest give me a chance, and the gal that catches me kin hev me.

MARGIE, DORA *and* VI.
(*All together.*)

All right—Go! (*They release him.*)

(JERRY *bounds off, left.* MARGIE, DORA *and* VI, *with* MARGIE *in the lead, exeunt left, after* JERRY, *screaming shrilly.* EARNEST *looks after them.* MARGIE, DORA *and* VI *all shout.*)

EARNEST.
(*Watching.*)

She got him.

MARGIE *runs on, left, dragging* JERRY.

MARGIE.
(*Out of breath.*)

He's mine.

JERRY.
(*Delighted.*)

By heck, that goes! (*Opens his arms.*) Come and git me.

(MARGIE *laughs and runs into* JERRY'S *arms.*)

DICKIE *and* PETER *enter from right, quickly.* VI *and* DORA *run on from left.*

ALL.
(*Together.*)

Oh!!!

CURTAIN.

AM I INTRUDING?

THE SECOND ACT.

The scene is the same. It is the afternoon of the following day.

The phonograph is playing a lively dance record when the curtain rises. VI *and* DICKIE *are dancing.* MARGIE *and* JERRY *are sitting on the settee down left, conversing quietly.* PETER *stands by the phonograph.* DORA *sits in the easy chair down left, rather unhappily watching the dancing couple.*

After a moment JANE *enters from the right. She crosses the stage in a very dignified manner, and exits left after dodging the dancers.* EARNEST, *carrying an armful of books, follows her. He goes down stage to avoid the dancers, and as he passes the settee,* JERRY *puts out his foot and trips him.* EARNEST *makes a funny fall.*

EARNEST.

(*Rises and picks up books, indignantly.*)

You ungentlemanly person! If you eveh upset me in this manneh again I shall chastise you severely. Do you heah? Severely!

JERRY.

Gosh, I apologize, Earnie. Guess I must hev the spring halt. But don't you think of chastisin' me, sonny, fer if ye do I'll feel hurt. (*Waves his foot at* EARNEST.)

EARNEST.

Rude person! (*Exits, left.*)

(PETER *stops the phonograph.*)

VI.

Isn't he the extreme scream? What did you do that for, Jerry?

JERRY.

Just wanted to see if he'd break.

VI.

Come on. Let's have a game of tennis.

DICKIE.

I second the motion. Come on, Vi. (*Takes her arm.*)

VI.

(*Turning.*)

Come on, Petie.

PETER.

(*Sullenly.*)

I don't want to play tennis.

VI.

(*Catches his hand.*)

Come on, poutie—

PETER.

(*Pulling his hand away.*)

You let me alone.

VI.

Have it your own way. See you later, Adam Sour Guy. Come on, Dickie. Come on, Doe and Margie, are you coming? (*Exits right, followed by* DICKIE.)

MARGIE.

(*Jumping up.*)

Are we, Jerry?

JERRY.

(*Rising.*)

You bet I am, if you be.

MARGIE.

Well, I be. Come on. (MARGIE *and* JERRY *exeunt right.*)

DORA.

(*Sadly.*)

I'll thtay here with you, Petie.

PETER.

(*Bitterly.*)

Can't Vi be mean, though? (*Comes center.*) Just because she knows you like Dickie—you do like him, don't you, Doe?

DORA.

(*Nods her head yes.*)

Yeth, I do.

PETER.

She goes and flirts with him, and *he's* a darn flirt, too.

DORA.

Oh, it ithn't hith fault.

PETER.

It is, too.

DORA.

It ith not, Petie. Vi jutht maketh him flirt.

PETER.

Oh, fish hooks. He's just as bad as she is, and worse.

DORA.

He ith not.

PETER.

He is too.

DORA.

He ithn't.

PETER.

He is.

DORA.

(*Wistfully.*)

I don't think you're a bit polite.

PETER.
(*Recklessly.*)
Being polite don't get you anything.

DORA.
I love polite people.

PETER.
(*With sudden brightness.*)
Say, Dora, I've got a scheme.

DORA.
What ith it?

PETER.
Let's you and me make Dickie and Vi jealous.

DORA.
(*Dubiously.*)
Do you thuppothe we could?

PETER.
Sure. You be devoted to me and I'll be devoted to you, and I'll bet they won't be so smart.

DORA.
(*Not convinced.*)
Thuppothe they don't get jealous?

PETER.
Then that's proof positive that they don't care. Don't you want to know the truth?

DORA.
(*Mournfully.*)
No—I don't believe I do.

PETER.
Well, I do. And it's better for you, too. They say jealousy is a sure sign of love.

DORA.

I alwayth thought it wath becauth you were biliouth.

PETER.

Well, are you game?

DORA.

(*Without enthusiasm.*)

Oh, dear, I gueth tho.

PETER.

All right; come on, then. We'll go canoeing now, and this evening when we go to the city to see the play, you sit close to me in the box, and we'll be devoted and just spoon all evening.

DORA.

Oh, dear, that'th wathting tho much time. Bethideth, it'th dangerouth.

PETER.

What do you mean, dangerous?

DORA.

(*With an awful thought.*)

Why, we might fall in love with—e a c h o t h e r!

PETER.

I don't care if we do.

DORA.

(*Close to tears.*)

Petie—you're tho pethimithtic.

PETER.

I can't help it. Oh, anyhow—a man never can understand a woman.

DORA.

(*Taking his arm and looking into his face.*)

Well, platonic friendship ith wonderful. We *will* be wonderful friendth.

PETER.

(*Smiling into her face.*)

Say—are your eyes brown or hazel?

DORA.

(*Smiling sentimentally into his face.*)

Brown. (*Or whatever they are.*)

PETER.

They certainly are awful pretty. Come on, bet we will have a dandy time on the water. (*Crosses up right.*)

DORA.

(*Crossing with him.*)

I'll bet we have a peachy time.

PETER.

I should worry about Vi.

DORA.

I thould worry about Dickie. (BOTH *exeunt, right, arm in arm.*)

JANE *enters, left, followed by* EARNEST, *carrying books as usual.*

JANE.

They have all gone. Now I can go out on the veranda where it is cool. Oh, dear, I seem to have no inspiration to write to-day.

EARNEST.

(*Indicating the large chair.*)

Why not sit here and rest a while?

JANE.

(*Considers it.*)

I think I shall. (*Crosses to chair and sits.*) Earnest, you are just wonderful. You seem to understand my every mood. After all, it is very diffi-

cult to keep tuned to the sublime all the time, isn't it?

EARNEST.

(*Nodding.*)

It is, really. (*Stoops and puts books on floor in front of her to make a footstool.*) Put youah little feet heah—it will rest you. I, too, long for companionship and sympathy, at times. Really.

JANE.

(*Tensely.*)

Do you—Earnest?

EARNEST.

(*With restraint.*)

Yes, Miss Harbison.

JANE.

Call me Jane.

EARNEST.

Thank you—Jane.

JANE.

Let us not work this afternoon, Earnest. Let us go for a long, long walk through goldenrod lane. (*She unconsciously throws off her inspired manner and becomes just an enthusiastic girl.*) Then we'll take the path through the woods, and come out by the water and go for a sail. That will be just ripping. Can you sail a boat? (*Rises.*)

EARNEST.

(*Dropping his affectation of manner, becomes an enthusiastic boy.*)

I sure can.

JANE.

Great! Come on then, Earnest. We will steal to-day. Let the old books stay there. (*Crosses up right.*)

EARNEST.

(*Grabbing her arm.*)

We're on our way. Let's go. (BOTH *exeunt eagerly, right.*)

VARE *enters slowly, left. He appears very despondent.* MARGIE *enters right.*

MARGIE.

Hello, daddy. You've been shut up in the library all day. I've been so worried. I came back to look for you. Now you must tell me what is troubling you. You sha'n't evade it any longer. I must know. (*Leads him to big chair at right.*) Sit down there and tell me everything. I know it must be serious, for I've never seen you like this.

VARE.

No, no; you sit there, I'll stand.

MARGIE.

Very well. (*Sits.*) Now I'm ready.

VARE.

(*Tries to smile.*)

What an imagination you have. Why, I'm all right.

MARGIE.

Nothing doing. You can't get away with that any longer, dad. Come on, 'fess up.

VARE.

(*Uneasily.*)

Well, I wish you were engaged or married to some one who was financially fixed to take care of you.

MARGIE.

Oh, that's what's worrying you? You want to get me off your hands? You want to get rid of me?

VARE.

(*Hurt.*)

Marjory!

MARGIE.

Now, no more evasion, dad. Out with it. It's money, isn't it?

VARE.

(*After a pause.*)

Yes.

MARGIE.

(*Rises, and puts her arm through his.*)

Well, tell me all about it. Why, dad, dear, that's not so worse. I'm big enough to be able to help some. I'm not afraid. I'll work in an office.

VARE.

Don't waste your time. Find a man, financially responsible, dear, and marry. You are twenty-two.

MARGIE.

Is my dad advising me to marry for money?

VARE.

Imagine you, wasting your time on Jerry, that green—

MARGIE.

(*Interrupting.*)

Now, dad. You don't see Jerry with my eyes. There are big possibilities in Gerald. I'm mighty fond of him.

VARE.

(*Dismayed.*)

Good Gracious! You aren't really serious?

MARGIE.

Yes, I am.

VARE.

Have you lost your senses?

MARGIE.

Let's talk about you, dad. Now, tell me everything. Your trouble has to do with that man Hoover—I know—the housekeeper's brother.

VARE.

No, he isn't responsible. I have invested all I have in the world in the Bluebird Motor Corporation. Two weeks ago the bottom dropped out of it. I am ruined—home mortgaged—everything gone—with notes to meet to-morrow.

MARGIE.

What has Hoover to do with it?

VARE.

He has offered to buy the Bluebird stock at a big sacrifice.

MARGIE.

Why? Why does he want it?

VARE.

That's just it. Why? I overheard him talking to his sister, and from their conversation they are very anxious to get the stock, so I decided they knew something. I refused to sell. But I'm afraid I'll have to let him have it. He has bought up my notes and they are due to-morrow.

MARGIE.

Won't he wait? Give you more time, dad?

VARE.

I'm afraid not.

MARGIE.

I'll ask him.

VARE.

Nonsense.

MARGIE.

Yes, dad. I'll try. But don't worry. We still

have to-day. Let to-morrow take care of itself. (*Crossing right.*) Let's go and sit on the veranda and talk. (*Brightly.*) Buck up, dad; I'll have a talk with this Hoover.

VARE.
(*Uneasily.*)
I don't like the idea. (*Starts right.*)

MARGIE.
Well, we'll try it. (MARGIE *and* VARE *exeunt right.*)

HOOVER *enters, left, followed by* MRS. HASTINGS.

MRS. HASTINGS.
Ask him again.

HOOVER.
(*Angrily.*)
Oh, quit nagging. Let me run my own business.

MRS. HASTINGS.
(*Indignantly.*)
"Your" business! I'd like to know—

HOOVER.
There you go again, "If it wasn't for me." I know you put me next to this thing. But if I'm to hear about it for the rest of my life, it's dear at half the price.

MRS. HASTINGS.
There's no one so smart that it will hurt him to listen to a little advice.

HOOVER.
Oh, I'm sick of advice. I know what I'm doing. I intend to speak to him to-day. But he's going to hang on to the stock till the last minute. It's lucky the notes come due to-morrow. The newspapers are

liable to get the dope any minute, and then—"flooey."

MRS. HASTINGS.

Oh, he'll let go of it. Someone's coming, I'll go. (*Exits quickly, left.*)

MARGIE *enters, right.*

MARGIE.

Good afternoon, Mr. Hoover. (*Comes center.*)

HOOVER.

(*Taken by surprise.*)

Good afternoon, Miss Vare.

MARGIE.

Mr. Hoover, my father tells me you hold notes of his.

HOOVER.

Sit down, Miss Vare.

MARGIE.

Thank you. (*Sits in easy chair at right.*)

HOOVER.

Yes, I do hold notes.

MARGIE.

Will you give my father a little more time?

HOOVER.

(*Smiles.*)

I'd like to accommodate such a pretty young lady, but—

MARGIE.

(*Rising.*)

But you will not?

HOOVER.

(*With outstretched hand.*)

Don't be in a hurry. (*Crosses, looks off left, and*

returns to center.) Your father is in a bad fix. He faces ruin, Miss Vare.

MARGIE.

How did you learn all this?

HOOVER.

Never mind, I know. Now, a dutiful daughter might save her father, and feather her own nest, besides.

MARGIE.

(*Concealing her disgust.*)

You put it prettily.

HOOVER.

Now my—sister—Mrs. Hastings—is peculiar. That is, she doesn't want me to marry. See?

MARGIE.

(*Quietly.*)

I see.

HOOVER.

I have plenty of money, and I'd like a wife that I could be proud of. Get me?

MARGIE.

Oh, yes.

HOOVER.

I'm not such a bad looker (*stretches himself importantly*), I've got a sweet disposition and I could make any girl happy. Don't you think so?

MARGIE.

No doubt of it; if she wasn't—too hard to please.

HOOVER.

(*Missing her sarcasm.*)

That's the dope. Now, I like you.

MARGIE.

Well enough to give my father time on the notes?

HOOVER.

Sure. Here's the big idea. You get your old man to turn the Bluebird stock over to you, see?

MARGIE.

I see.

HOOVER.

To-night your bunch is going to the city to see a play.

MARGIE.

Yes.

HOOVER.

Well, you bring the stock. I'll meet you in the city, see? We'll just run over to New Jersey and get married. And I don't care if your old man never pays the notes.

MARGIE.

(*Sweetly.*)

Just put the extension of time on those notes in writing, will you, Mr. Hoover?

HOOVER.

(*Taken aback.*)

Oh, say.

MARGIE.

(*Seriously.*)

I'd do most anything to save my father.

HOOVER.

You would? (*Thinks.*) All right, I'll do it.

MRS. HASTINGS *enters quietly left, and listens, unobserved.* HOOVER *writes on back of a check, with fountain pen, at table.*

HOOVER.

(*Having finished writing, rises.*)

Here you are, honey. But you've got to give me a kiss to seal the bargain.

MARGIE.
(*Smiling.*)

Of course. (*Approaches him, smiling, suddenly snatches paper, and runs up left, directly into* MRS. HASTINGS's *arms.*)

MRS. HASTINGS.
(*Snatching paper from* MARGIE.)

What's this?

MARGIE.
(*Trying to get it.*)

It's mine.

MRS. HASTINGS.
(*Protecting it.*)

No, it's mine.

HOOVER.
(*Excitedly.*)

Keep it, Kate.

MARGIE.
(*Furiously.*)

Oh, you miserable pair of cheats! But I'll save my father, in spite of you! (*Exits quickly, right.*)

MRS. HASTINGS.
(*Coming center, after reading paper.*)

So that's your plan, eh? Throw me over and marry a younger woman?

HOOVER.

Don't be foolish.

MRS. HASTINGS.

You try that again, and I'll go to Mr. Vare and tell him the whole story.

HOOVER.

I was only kidding the girl.

MONA *enters left, listens, and goes behind the screen.*

MRS. HASTINGS.

Mighty serious kidding. (*Tears paper.*) To-night you and I will go to the city and get married, Blair.

HOOVER.

(*Impatiently.*)

Sure, any time. Only I'd rather wait until—

MRS. HASTINGS.

We will *not* wait. You will marry me to-night. (*Exits left.*)

MONA.

(*Coming down center excitedly.*)

So! You geeve me ze double-cross, eh? You marree zat ol' woman? Ha! Eet is to laugh. I will see you in ze prison—comprenez-vous?

HOOVER.

Be quiet.

MONA.

(*Furious.*)

Non! I weell not be quiet. Jamais—nevair! I weell make one beeg—shindy! I weell shriek. You are one beeg wasp!

HOOVER.

Cutie, cutie, behave.

MONA.

You "cutie" me, I slap my hand in your face!

HOOVER.

Now, now. (*Puts his arms around her.*) Listen. You are my onliest little girl.

MONA.

(*A bit placated.*)

Zat ol' woman eez one beeg tabby cat.

HOOVER.

Right you are, peaches. But we must be nice to

her for a little while longer. You won't spoil the whole scheme by kicking things over now, will you?

MONA.

(*Hesitating.*)

When I keek—I keek hard.

HOOVER.

You bet your life you do. But we will cut "ze keeks" for a day or two, eh?

MONA.

I cut ze keek—eef you svear you love me.

HOOVER.

I swear—fluently.

MONA.

(*Smiling.*)

Oh, Blair, you are so fonnee!

HOOVER.

Now you run along, peachy.

MONA.

Once more I run along. But be-ware; do not mek me angree. Ven I get so excite and angree—I blow up! And I speell all ze secrets.

HOOVER.

Well, just put yourself on ice for a day or two, honey, keep cool. (*Takes her up right.*)

MONA.

I put myself on ze ice—but be careful or I melt heem. Keess me. (*Kisses* HOOVER.) I be good. (*Exits left.*)

HOOVER.

Whew! (*Mopping his forehead.*)

VARE *enters right.*

VARE.

Here again, Mr. Hoover?

HOOVER.

How is it to-day, Mr. Vare?

VARE.

I'll wait until to-morrow. I'll keep my last day of grace.

HOOVER.

Have it your own way.

VARE.

I intend to, Mr. Hoover. (*Exits left.*)

DORA *and* PETER *run on right.*

HOOVER.

Hello, youngsters. Having a good time?

DORA.

Oh, jutht thplendid.

HOOVER.

That's the dope. (*Exits right.*)

DORA.

(*Enthusiastically.*)

Oh, Petie, it'th working, ithn't it?

PETER.

(*Indifferently.*)

Do you think so?

DORA.

Sure it ith. Why, Vi wath jutht thruck thpeechleth when she thaw you put your arm around me. She never wath tho thurprithed in all her thweet young life.

PETER.

(*Touched by remorse.*)

I hate to make her suffer.

DORA.

Oh, Petie, don't give in now. It'th working beautifully. (*Looks off right.*) Oh, here she cometh. Petie, come here quick. (*Sits on chair down right.*) Thit on the arm of the chair, quick! Put your arm around my neck.

PETER.

(*Listlessly.*)

Oh, what's the use? (*Does so.*)

VI *enters right, quickly.*

VI.

Petie! Oh, excuse me. (*Sees* PETER *and* DORA.) Gee, I'd have used the brake if I'd thought I was going to run into two such sweet peaches. (*Calls off right.*) Dickie, come here. (PETER *and* DORA *rise in mock embarrassment.*)

DICKIE *enters, right.*

DICKIE.

Huh?

VI.

You should have seen the turtle-doves a second ago.

DICKIE.

What do you mean, turtle-doves?

VI.

(*Scathingly.*)

Sitting on a limb, heads together, hands entwined —the whole sentimental works. (*Goes over and sits on settee angrily.*)

DICKIE.

(*Crosses to* VI *at settee.*)

Well, we should worry.

VI.

Oh, go away!

PETER.

(*Sweetly, to* DORA, *as he starts right.*)

Come on, dearie.

DORA.

(*Crossing to* PETER.)

All right, Petie.

VI.

(*Rising quickly.*)

Petie, I want to tell you something.

PETER.

Haven't time now, Vi. Have an engagement with Dora.

(DORA *and* PETER *exeunt, right.* VI *sits quickly.*)

DICKIE.

I never knew Peter cared for Dora. Gee, I was getting serious there. (*Sits beside* VI.)

VI.

(*With a sniff.*)

I don't know what men see in her.

DICKIE.

She's a real sweet kid.

VI.

And I thought Petie could never, never see any other girl but me. And now he coolly passes me up for her. Why, he never did such a thing before.

MARGIE *enters quickly, right.*

MARGIE.

Oh, Dickie, come here a minute, will you?

DICKIE.

(*Jumps up quickly, and crosses to* MARGIE.)
You bet. (*Exits right, with* MARGIE.)

VI.

(*Miffed.*)
Well, I like that.

JERRY *backs on angrily, right.*

JERRY.

Why, the dern city jay, he ain't got the manners of my heifer—

VI.

(*Interrupting.*)
What's the matter, Jerry?

JERRY.

Gee, I'm all broke up. Honest, I am. (*Crosses to center.*)

VI.

Come over here and sit down. (JERRY *sits beside* VI.) What's the trouble, old dear?

JERRY.

Gosh. I'm in love.

VI.

Country lanes and city cobblestones! Who are you in love with?

JERRY.

I'm sweet on Marjory, gosh ding it. And she don't give a hoot er a haw fer me. Why, I love that gal so much I'd empty the Atlantic with a bucket if she wanted me to. And she's jest mashed on that city jay. Oh, gee!

VI.

(*Putting her arm around* JERRY's *neck.*)
Never mind, Jerry, old dear. We will console

each other. That little kitten Dora has taken my Petie away from me, too. Oh, gee! (*Imitating his exclamation.*)

MARGIE *enters quickly with* PETER, *right.*

VI.

(*Jumps up and runs to* PETER.)

Oh, Petie—

PETER.

(*Quickly.*)

You keep away from me. (*Exits, right.*)

VI.

Petie, let me explain. (*Exits, right.*)

MARGIE.

(*Coming to center.*)

Well! And you pretended to like me. I never thought it of you, Jerry.

JERRY.

Oh, say. Hold on, Margie.

MARGIE.

(*Coolly.*)

You are learning very fast. But I don't care if you don't. (*Crosses and sits in easy chair at right.*)

JERRY.

(*Crossing to center.*)

Oh, Margie. Say, sugar, I love you, better'n all the world. Honest I do. Don't be mad at me, Margie. (*Sits on books.*) Some day we're going to be married. It don't seem possible you could like me well enough, but I believe you do. I love you.

MARGIE.

(*Pushes him over and runs to left door; laughs.*)

I'm glad to hear you say that. But you'll have to prove it.

JERRY.

(*Starting quickly up left.*)

I'll do that, by hickory! (*Catches her hand and brings her back to center.*)

MARGIE.

Jerry, my father is in trouble. I'm dreadfully worried.

JERRY.

Listen. I know all about it. If I get your father out of it, will ye marry me some day—if I go to a city school and get human-looking?

MARGIE.

Jerry, if you save my father (*thinks a moment*), I'll marry you and love you forever after.

JERRY.

(*Eagerly.*)

It's a go! And when I do, will you give me a kiss?

MARGIE.

Yes.

JERRY.

Well I won't ask for it till then.

MONA *enters, left.*

MONA.

Meess Vare, your gown is layed and I am ready to dress you for ze theatre to-night.

MARGIE.

I'm coming, Mona.

MONA.

Tres bien. (*Exits left.*)

MARGIE.

Jerry, won't you come with us to-night?

JERRY.

Gosh, no. I'm afeered of the city.

MARGIE.

(*Laughs.*)

Oh, you get out! (*Exits left. Change costume.*)

JERRY.

(*Kicks himself in glee.*)

Jerry, ol' hoss, you've won the finest gal in these here United States, gosh ding it! (*Stands looking off left, enraptured.*)

JANE *enters, right, followed by* EARNEST.

JANE.

Earnest, the references.

EARNEST.

Yes, dear. (*Picks up books.*)

JERRY.

(*Turning as they speak.*)

Hello. How be ye?

JANE.

At a standstill. I'm waiting for material to finish the twenty-third chapter.

JERRY.

You'll git it soon. Remember what I told you. (*Mysteriously.*) Be ready. Sh! (*Finger to lips, with absurd gesture of caution.*)

JANE.

Sh! (*Same business.*)

EARNEST.

Sh! (*Same business.*)

(JANE *and* EARNEST *exeunt, left.*)

MONA *enters left, stops, kisses her hand and blows the kiss to* JERRY.

MONA.

Oh you keed!

JERRY.

(*With a "shooing" gesture.*)

Scat! Get out, you little son-of-a-gun.

DORA *enters right, with* DICKIE, *followed by* VI *with* PETER.

MONA.

Ladies, eet ees time to dress for dinair.

VI.

All right, Mona. Come on, kids. Come on, Petie darling. (*Exits quickly, left, with* PETER. *Change costumes.*)

DORA.

Hello, Jerry, old pal.

DICKIE.

How are the crops?

JERRY.

Great, by heck!

(DICKIE *and* DORA *laugh, and exeunt left. Change costumes.*)

MONA.

(*To* JERRY, *mischievously.*)

I get you yet.

JERRY.

Derned if ye do.

MONA.

(*Crossing to him.*)

Don't you like me one leetle beet, Jerree?

JERRY.

(*Waving her away.*)

Shoo! Don't you come near me. Shoo. Get out.

MONA.

(*Laughing gleefully.*)

Oh, you fonnee country-man. How is ze peeg and ze leetle shickens?

JERRY.

Cooped up, by heck. That's where you ought to be.

MONA.

You are afraid? Of me?

JERRY.

Just as soon fool around poison oak, by heck.

MONA.

(*Laughing.*)

Nevair mind. I get you yet—by heck. (*Exits left.*)

While JERRY *is looking off after her,* VARE *enters left.*

VARE.

Hello, Jerry.

JERRY.

Howdy, Mr. Vare.

VARE.

How are you enjoying your visit?

JERRY.

I'm havin' one heck of a time, by gosh.

VARE.

I'm glad to hear it.

JERRY.

Yes, sir. And say, Mr. Vare, don't you do no more worrying, becuz things is going to break all O. K. for you.

VARE.

I'm glad to hear you say so, Jerry. But who told you I was in trouble?

JERRY.

Margie.

VARE.

(*Not pleased.*)

Oh.

JERRY.

(*Twisting his hat in his hands, in embarrassment.*)

Mr. Vare—

VARE.

(*Curtly.*)

Yes.

JERRY.

Gosh. I want to say—

VARE.

(*Impatiently.*)

Yes.

JERRY.

I want to ask you—

VARE.

Go on.

JERRY.

(*Confused.*)

Gee, I can't. Oh, gosh. Mr. Vare—Margie and me—By hickory, I can't say it. (*Pleadingly.*) Oh, help a feller out, Mr. Vare.

VARE.

If it were anyone but you, Jerry—my old chum's son—I should be mightily tempted to help you out.

JERRY.

(*Delighted.*)

Oh, gee!

VARE.

With the toe of my boot.

JERRY.

(*In alarm.*)

Oh, gosh!

VARE.

(*In a kindly tone.*)

Why, Jerry, lad, you could never make my girl happy. I don't want to wound you, but you are rough—uneducated—poor.

JERRY.

Oh, I could take care of her. I got some money saved up. If I was polished up and educated, would you give me a chance?

VARE.

Yes, of course—if Margie is willing to wait that long.

JERRY.

Oh, she won't have to wait so long. I'm quicker'n chain lightnin' when I get started.

VARE.

(*Cordially.*)

All right, Jerry. We'll let it go at that. (*Holds out his hand.*)

JERRY.

(*Taking* VARE's *hand.*)

And—say, Mr. Vare, you kin have that money I've got in the bank, if ye need it.

VARE.

How much could you let me have?

JERRY.

(*Proudly.*)

I kin let ye have two hundred and fifty—cash.

VARE.

(*Laughing.*)

Never mind, Jerry. That's mighty kind of you. But it wouldn't help any.

JERRY.

Well, don't give up, Mr. Vare. Don't forgit what Shakespeare said, "While there's hope, there's life," or something like that.

VARE.

I'll remember. And thanks for your good intentions.

JERRY.

(*Generously.*)

Oh, that's all right. You're going to be my father-in-law some day. I ain't doin' no more than right. Well, I'll go and dress fer dinner. So long. (*Exits left. Change costume.*)

VARE.

(*Calls after him.*)

So long, Jerry.

MRS. HASTINGS *enters left. She evidently has something on her mind.*

MRS. HASTINGS.

Mr. Vare.

VARE.

Mrs. Hastings, you understand you are to prepare dinner for six only this evening. The young folks and I are going to the city, and we won't be home until after midnight.

MRS. HASTINGS.

Yes, Mr. Vare.

VARE.

The girls will have to hurry if we catch the five-thirty. We shall dine in the city.

MRS. HASTINGS.

Yes, sir.

VARE.

(*In courteous dismissal.*)

Very good.

MRS. HASTINGS.
(*Hesitates.*)
Mr. Vare.

VARE.
Yes, Mrs. Hastings.

MRS. HASTINGS.
You will please accept my resignation, to take effect a week from to-night.

VARE.
(*Searchingly.*)
What's the trouble, Mrs. Hastings?

MRS. HASTINGS.
(*Uneasily.*)
I can better myself.

VARE.
(*Quietly.*)
Very well, Mrs. Hastings.

MRS. HASTINGS.
Thank you. (*Exits left.*)

(MARGIE, VI *and* DORA *laugh off left.*)
MARGIE *enters, left, in evening gown.*

MARGIE.
Well, dad, guess we're all ready. Aren't you going to dress?

VARE.
No.

VI *runs on, left, followed by* DORA. *They both have changed to evening gowns.* DICKIE *and* PETER, *in evening dress, follow the girls on.* MONA *enters after them, carrying the girls' cloaks.*

VI.
(*Gayly.*)
All right, dad. Why, you're not dressed.

VARE.

I'm not going to change. While you're at the theatre, I have some business to transact in the city. I'll call for you after the show.

VI.

(*Disappointed.*)

Oh, dad, that isn't fair. How do you like my gown, dad?

VARE.

Mighty pretty.

VI.

How much time have we?

VARE.

Oh, a little time yet. You weren't long in dressing.

VI.

Let's have just one dance before we go.

DORA.

Let'th.

PETER.

(*Crossing right.*)

I'll be the orchestra. (*Starts phonograph, with dance record.*)

VI.

I'm not dancing.

DICKIE.

What?

VI.

(*Wistfully.*)

Am I, Petie?

MARGIE.

(*Urging.*)

Go on, Petie. You and Vi dance. I'll look out for the orchestra. (*Crosses right.*)

DICKIE.

Come on, Dora.

VI.

Come on, Petie.

(PETER *and* VI *dance;* DICKIE *and* DORA *dance. When the music is about half through—*)

JERRY *enters, left, in ill-fitting evening clothes.*

VI.

(*Seeing* JERRY.)

Oh, look at Jerry!

JERRY.

(*Grinning.*)

Howdy, folks. Am I intruding? (*All laugh.*) Come on dance, Margie.

MARGIE.

(*At phonograph.*)

I'm the orchestra.

JERRY.

(*Picking up a sofa cushion.*)

All right. I can't step on this girl's toes. (*Does funny dancing with cushion. All laugh. Dancing continues through record.* MARGIE *stops machine.*)

VARE.

(*When record has finished.*)

Well, children, come on. It's time. Sorry you're not coming, Jerry. (*Exits right.*)

(MONA *starts helping girls with wraps.*)

JERRY.

I'll park here till ye come back.

MARGIE.

Good-bye, Jerry.

VI.

Will you be up when we come home, Jerry?

JERRY.

I expect to be. (*General "Good-byes" by all.*) So long.

(MARGIE, DORA, VI, PETER *and* DICKIE *exeunt right, in order named, chattering to one another.*)

MONA.

(*To* JERRY, *slyly.*)

Oh you keed!

JERRY.

(*Shying away.*)

Oh you bumblebee!

MONA.

I steal you yet, Jerree!

JERRY.

Not if I see you coming.

MONA.

(*Coyly.*)

Nighty-night—Jerree!

JERRY.

(*Laughing.*)

So long, bumble.

MONA.

Me a bee, you a sveet violet. Bonne nuit, Jerree. (*Throws a kiss and exits left.*)

JERRY.

(*Calls after her.*)

Sweet nightmares, Frenchy. Gol dern it, that gal's got her eye on me.

HOOVER *enters, right.*

HOOVER.

(*Attempting cordiality.*)

Hello, buddy. Left us all alone, eh?

JERRY.
(*Coolly.*)
Yep.

HOOVER.
What do you say to a little game of cards?

JERRY.
(*Curtly.*)
Nothing doing.

HOOVER.
Can't you play?

JERRY.
I kin but I won't.

HOOVER.
(*Annoyed.*)
Won't play with me, eh?

JERRY.
Nope.

HOOVER.
And why not?

JERRY.
I don't like ye.

HOOVER.
(*Sitting in big chair.*)
Oh, you don't, eh?

JERRY.
Nope.

HOOVER.
Why don't you like me?

JERRY.
Want to know?

HOOVER.
Sure I want to know.

JERRY.
Well I think you're a no-account, measly, gosh-dinged, yaller hound.

HOOVER.

(*Jumping up angrily, shouts.*)

Why, you—(*Starts toward* JERRY.)

JERRY.

(*Quietly draws a small blue-steel automatic.*)

Sit down, you. Sit down and let's have a quiet little talk. No use gettin' excited.

HOOVER.

(*Scared.*)

Why, you big boob, don't fool with that thing. It's dangerous.

JERRY.

Bet yer sweet collar button it is. Sit down! (*Motions with gun to chair.*)

HOOVER.

(*Sits.*)

Put that thing away. It might go off.

JERRY.

Ye're dern right, it might.

JANE *enters, left.*

HOOVER.

(*Quickly.*)

Miss Harbison, run for help. Quick! This maniac has a gun.

JANE.

(*Pleasantly.*)

Yes, I know. I loaned it to him.

EARNEST *enters, left, with* MRS. HASTINGS *on his trail.*

MRS. HASTINGS.

Good evening.

HOOVER.
(*In warning.*)

Kate!

MRS. HASTINGS.
(*Coming center.*)

What's the matter?

EARNEST.
(*Follows quickly behind* MRS. HASTINGS, *catches her arms and pinions them behind her back.*)

All right, Jane.

JANE.
(*Comes down quickly, pulls spread from table and binds it around* MRS. HASTINGS'S *waist, pinioning her arms.*)

Stand still. Be quiet, Mrs. Hastings. Don't struggle, and you won't be hurt. We're just taking a little precaution. (JERRY *keeps* HOOVER *covered.*)

MRS. HASTINGS.
(*Very much frightened.*)

I'll be quiet.

EARNEST.
(*Gets small arm chair from right of table and brings it down stage a little.*)

Sit down, Mrs. Hastings.

(MRS. HASTINGS *sits.*)

JANE.

Now for her feet, Earnest.

EARNEST.
(*Ties* MRS. HASTINGS'S *feet together with a cord which he takes from his pocket.*)

Sorry to have to treat a woman like this, by jove.

HOOVER.
(*Blustering.*)

Say, what's the big idea?

JERRY.

Don't get impatient, buddy. Your turn's next.

HOOVER.

What do you want?

JERRY.

In a minute. Jane, just slip a double hitch around this guy, will ye. Stand up! (*Takes coil of rope from pocket.* HOOVER *rises.* JANE *comes down quickly, and ties* HOOVER *around the waist, binding his arms.*) Don't move, and don't try to holler. A sudden noise would make me nervous, and I've got my finger on the trigger.

HOOVER.

(*Sullenly.*)

I'm not making any noise. All I want to know is, what you want with us.

(EARNEST *ties* HOOVER'S *feet together at the ankles with another cord.*)

JERRY.

Earnest, git a chair for Mr. Hoover. Slide it under him. Then we kin have a cozy little chat, by heck. (EARNEST, *who has gotten the other chair, slides it under* HOOVER, *who is left of* MRS. HASTINGS.) Squat! (HOOVER *sits, quickly and nervously.* JANE *crosses and stands watching off left.* EARNEST *crosses and stands watching off right.* JERRY *stands.*) Now to business. Mr. Hoover, you have notes of Mr. Vare's. They come due tomorrow, and you're going to press him.

HOOVER.

(*Quickly.*)

I'll give him more time.

JERRY.

That's gol dern sweet of you. But I'll just take care of them notes myself. Somehow I don't just go by what you say. Got 'em on ye?

HOOVER.

(*Snaps.*)

No.

JERRY.

Earnie, jest go through Mr. Hoover's pockets and find them notes.

EARNEST.

(*Crosses to* HOOVER, *and goes through his pockets.*) The pleasure is all mine. (*Finds a wallet, and takes out notes.*) Ah, heah they are. (JERRY *takes them and puts them in his pocket*).

HOOVER.

(*Blustering.*)

Say, this is going to cost you something.

JERRY.

I'm always willin' to pay for my fun, buddy. Now, you can't present them notes to-morrow when you ain't got 'em, kin ye? And maybe me and the notes ain't goin' to be here then. Now for the important part of this little drammer, and that's the *stocks.* Mr. Hoover, why are you so dern anxious to buy them stocks? Speak up, and dern quick! Mr. Vare is goin' to be my father-in-law, and I ain't a-goin' to see him done by no sharper.

HOOVER.

Ho! That's it, eh?

JERRY.

Yep, that's it. Now, cough up the secret of them Bluebird stocks, and cough dern quick!

EARNEST.
(*Blandly.*)

That's the ideah!

JANE.

Exactly.

(HOOVER *laughs sarcastically.*)

JERRY.

Hurry up!

MRS. HASTINGS.

Tell him, Blair.

HOOVER.
(*Angrily.*)

Shut up!

MRS. HASTINGS.

I won't shut up! I'm sick of this business, anyway. I don't trust you.

JERRY.
(*Heartily.*)

That's the talk. Tell us all about it, Mrs. Hastings.

HOOVER.
(*Threatening.*)

If you do—

JANE.
(*Interrupting quietly.*)

Don't let him intimidate you, Mrs. Hastings. If you do the right thing you will be protected. Is the Bluebird stock valuable?

MRS. HASTINGS.

Yes.

HOOVER.
(*Snarls.*)

That's a lie!

MRS. HASTINGS.
(*To* JERRY.)

It's the truth. Tell Mr. Vare not to sell.

JERRY.

(*Speaks rapidly till curtain.*)

Hooray! That's all I want to know now. I've got to catch the seven-fifteen to the city. I'd like to let y o u go, Mrs. Hastings, but we'll keep ye here until midnight. I may be back by then, and I may not. All depends. But the folks'll be in on the one-thirty. Earnie, take this (*gives gun*). Use it if you have to. Better just gag 'em (*ties handkerchief over* HOOVER's *mouth*), in case they take a notion to yip too loud. Little Frenchy is upstairs. We don't want to disturb her slumbers. (JANE *ties* EARNEST's *handkerchief over* MRS. HASTINGS's *mouth.*) Now, Jane, you've got the big scene for your story.

JANE.

You bet. (*Picks up her pad and pencil, and sits on settee.*)

JERRY.

All set?

JANE.

Yes.

JERRY.

Go! (*Dashes out right door.*)

(JANE *writes rapidly.* EARNEST *sits in big chair down right, alertly holding pistol pointed at* HOOVER.)

CURTAIN.

THE THIRD ACT.

The scene is the same. The time is past midnight.

The rise of the curtain reveals HOOVER, MRS. HASTINGS, EARNEST *and* JANE, *all fast asleep, in different funny positions.* HOOVER *and* MRS. HASTINGS *are bound to their chairs as at the close of the Second Act.* JANE *is half reclining on the settee down left, with writing pad in hand and loose sheets of paper scattered at her feet.* EARNEST *is in the big chair down right, unconsciously holding the gun in a funny position under his nose. The handkerchief gags have fallen loose.*

HOOVER *snores softly. Then* MRS. HASTINGS *snores; then* EARNEST; *then* JANE. *Differentiate the snores, for comedy. When the curtain is full up and the scene has had a chance to register on the audience,* HOOVER *suddenly gives a loud snort, which wakes them all up with a start.*

EARNEST.

(*Just coming to.*)

Oh, yes. Exactly. I think so, too. Ah—you were saying?

JANE.

(*Dazed.*)

I beg your pardon? Oh, I was saying—it must be nearly time for the folks to be here. Don't you think so? (*Sees papers, and gathers them up.*) You were asleep.

EARNEST.

I? Not at all. Heard every word you said.

JANE.

What did I say?

EARNEST.

Oh, that—ah—really—ah—I don't remember the —ah—exact words.

HOOVER.

(*Disgusted.*)

Be quiet. Let me sleep, or undo these cords. They're cutting my ankles.

EARNEST.

Sorry, but you will have to endure it for a while longer, I fancy.

HOOVER.

(*Sneering, to* MRS. HASTINGS.)

You're a nice faithful friend, you are.

MRS. HASTINGS.

(*Angrily.*)

Don't blame me. It's your own fault. I've done enough for you, but you didn't appreciate it.

HOOVER.

(*Hotly.*)

Just wait till I'm out of this. I'll make some one dance a jig.

EARNEST.

Jigs—ah—are awfully out of date, old fellow.

HOOVER.

Is that so? Well, I'll revive a few. How does that strike you?

EARNEST.

Make it something modern, old dear.

JANE.

(*Suddenly.*)

What time is it?

EARNEST.

(*Looking at watch.*)

The train is in. It's one-thirty.

MONA *enters left.*

MONA.

(*Curiously.*)

Ah! Oh, what is eet? A play? (*Frightened.*) Oh, mon Dieu!

HOOVER.

Be quiet.

MONA.

It eez a game, yes? (*Sees* EARNEST'S *gun, and screams.*) Oh, oh! Take eet away! For why you have zat? (*Points to gun.*)

JANE.

Be quiet, Mona. There is nothing to be afraid of. Mr. Hoover and Mrs. Hastings will soon be released from their unpleasant predicament.

MONA.

(*Puzzled.*)

I do not un'erstan'! Tell me somesing.

HOOVER.

Be quiet, I tell you. My head aches. Mr. Vare will be home in a few moments, and then somebody will have to answer, believe me!

MONA.

(*Casually.*)

Oui. I wait to undress ze ladies. (MARGIE, VI *and* DORA *laugh, off right.*) Ah, zey are here.

MARGIE, VI *and* DORA *enter, right. Their three speeches are all given together as they come in.*

MARGIE.

(*Entering.*)

It was, I tell you.

DORA.

(*Entering.*)

It wath not.

VI.

(*Entering.*)

No such thing.

(*They see* HOOVER *and* MRS. HASTINGS, *and all together say "Oh!"*)

VARE *enters, right, with* DICKIE *and* PETER.

MARGIE.

Daddy!

VARE.

(*Astonished.*)

What does this mean, Jane?

HOOVER.

(*Angrily.*)

Release me. Cut these cords!

EARNEST.

(*To* JANE.)

Shall we?

JANE.

Yes. Uncle is here now. I guess Jerry didn't come.

DICKIE.

(*Untying* HOOVER.)

What kind of a game is this?

PETER.

(*Untying* MRS. HASTINGS.)

Gee! Was it burglars?

HOOVER.

It was that hick, Jerry. But just wait.

VARE.

(*Amazed.*)

Jerry? Why did he do this?

JANE.

To save you, uncle. Playing for time to meet the notes due to-day.

DICKIE.

(*Discreetly.*)

Excuse me; this seems to be a family matter. Come on, Pete. See you later, folks. (*Exits, left.*)

PETER.

(*All curiosity.*)

Oh, gee, let's stay.

DORA.

Not me. (*Gives* MONA *a significant look and exits, left, followed by* MONA.)

VI.

Well, this is a situation. Where's Jerry?

JANE.

Gone to the city.

VARE.

(*Distressed.*)

Jerry has meddled in what doesn't concern him. Marjory, Violet, go to your rooms.

MARGIE.

Oh, let me stay, dad.

VARE.

No.

MARGIE.

Mrs. Hastings, come with us. We would like a little luncheon. I'm too excited to sleep.

PETER.

(*Thrilled.*)

Gee, I couldn't sleep. What did Jerry do it for?

MARGIE.

(*Crossing left.*)

We'll be in the breakfast room, Mrs. Hastings. (*Exits left.*)

MRS. HASTINGS.

Very well. (*Exits left.*)

VI.

(*Eagerly.*)

Come on, Jane. Tell us all about it.

JANE.

It's too late.

VI.

Why it's early—only about two o'clock in the morning. Come on! Come on, Petie. (VI *and* JANE *exeunt, left.*)

PETER.

Come on, Earnest. Gee, I wish I'd been here. When did it happen? Come on, tell us all about it. What's Jerry's big idea? (*Puts his arm through* EARNEST'S, *and exits, left, with* EARNEST.)

VARE.

(*After watching them go.*)

Now, Mr. Hoover, what happened?

HOOVER.

(*Angrily.*)

You see what happened. At the point of a gun, that hick held me up—bound and gagged us—and stole the notes.

VARE.

(*Not excited.*)

What? Ah, I see; trying to help me, by disappearing with the notes. Well, that does delay proceedings, doesn't it. You can't ask me to pay you unless you have the notes to present for cancellation, can you (*smiling*), Mr. Hoover?

HOOVER.

No, I can't. But I can swear out a warrant for the arrest of that fellow. I'll send him to prison.

VARE.

Where is Jerry?

JERRY *enters, right, in time to hear the question.*

JERRY.

(*Brightly.*)

Here I am, Mr. Vare. Am I intruding? (*Grins.*) Here are the notes, Mr. Vare; and here is the money to meet them. (*Gives notes and check to* VARE.)

VARE.

(*In astonishment.*)

Jerry! Where did you get this?

JERRY.

(*Proudly.*)

In the city. Saw my old dad and made him cough up, by heck.

VARE.

Jerry, I can't accept this.

JERRY.

Ye got to. Ain't ye goin' to be my father-in-law? Dad's comin' up to-morrow and there'll be some reunion—mebbe a weddin'.

VARE.

(*Looking at check.*)

Jerry, I don't know what to say—

JERRY.

(*Embarrassed, interrupts.*)

Then don't say it. Just pay that skunk and let him go.

PETER *enters left.*

PETER.

Jerry! (*Calls off.*) Kids, here's Jerry. (*Crosses and shakes hands with* JERRY.) Where you been, Jerry?

JERRY.

I've ben to the city.

VARE.

Mr. Hoover, here is a check on the Greenwich bank, New York, to cover the notes. (*Gives check.*) I guess that's all right.

HOOVER.

Yes, that's all right. Now, will you sell me that stock?

VARE.

Yes, I'll let you have it.

JERRY.

(*Quickly.*)

Oh, no you won't, father-in-law.

VARE.

What do you mean?

HOOVER.

(*Out of patience.*)

Say, young fellow, I was inclined to let you off easy. But if you keep butting in I'll make you wish you were back home feeding pigs and chickens. See?

JERRY.

You bet I see.

VARE.

It's all right, Jerry. I'll let him have the stock. I must have money. I made a last effort to raise it in the city to-night, but failed. The stock must go.

JERRY.

(*Calmly.*)

Then I'll take it.

VARE.

(*Amazed.*)

You?

HOOVER.
(*Sneering.*)
Huh!

JERRY.
(*Taking a newspaper out of his pocket.*)
Here's the early edition of the Tribune. (*Opens newspaper and points.*) Read that.

VARE.
(*Snatches paper, and reads.*)
Good Lord!

JERRY.
I guess the Bluebird stock has gone up, eh, father-in-law?

VARE.
(*Giving* HOOVER *the paper.*)
Read that, Hoover.

HOOVER.
(*Glances at it.*)
It's all off. (*To* JERRY.) You're darn slick, ain't you, sonny! (*Sneering.*)

JERRY.
Couldn't be no slicker. When you city jays think you're going to put it all over a country boy, guess again, 'cause ye ain't. See?

VARE.
You knew the value of those stocks all the time, eh, Hoover?

HOOVER.
Sure I did. That's business.

JERRY.
Pretty rotten business.

PETER.
Absolutely.

HOOVER.

Well, I've lost. But (*to* JERRY, *with malicious meaning*), I owe you something, sonny.

JERRY.

I never expect to git it if you owe it, mister.

HOOVER.

This is one debt I'm going to pay.

JERRY.

If ye do I'll drive a nail in it and keep it for a soovyneer.

VARE.

(*With cool finality.*)

I'll bid you good-night, Mr. Hoover. (*Exits left.*)

HOOVER.

(*Curtly.*)

Good-night, Vare.

JERRY.

(*Going left.*)

See ye later, mister.

HOOVER.

(*Grimly.*)

You bet you will. And I'll have a surprise for you.

JERRY.

(*Indifferently.*)

Ah, put a feather in it and keep it to shoo the flies with. (*Exits left. Change costume.*)

PETER.

(*Laughs.*)

Ha, ha! (*Exits after* JERRY, *left.*)

(HOOVER *takes a quick turn up stage and back, in great anger.*)

MRS. HASTINGS *enters left.*

MRS. HASTINGS.
(*Quickly.*)
What has he done?

HOOVER.
What has who done?

MRS. HASTINGS.
Vare.

HOOVER.
Done me, I guess.

MRS. HASTINGS.
He paid the notes?

HOOVER.
Yes.

MRS. HASTINGS.
And the stock?

HOOVER.
Say, why do you have to speak of that stock?

MRS. HASTINGS.
They would have found out if I hadn't told. I wasn't going to endanger my life.

HOOVER.
Bah!

MRS. HASTINGS.
Well, one never knows what a crazy boy might do.

HOOVER.
Your cold feet cost me something.

MRS. HASTINGS.
I'm sorry, Blair.

HOOVER.
What good does that do?

MRS. HASTINGS.

What are your plans?

HOOVER.

My plans are to get out of here as soon as I can. Get my stuff together for me, will you?

MRS. HASTINGS.

I'll be ready when you are.

HOOVER.

You'll be ready?

MRS. HASTINGS.

Yes.

HOOVER.

Don't make me laugh.

MRS. HASTINGS.

You're not going to leave me, Blair?

HOOVER.

Well, I should say I a m going to leave you.

MRS. HASTINGS.

You are?

HOOVER.

I am.

MRS. HASTINGS.

How about the money I gave you?

HOOVER.

(*Smiling.*)

You g a v e it to me, didn't you? You don't want it back, do you?

MRS. HASTINGS.

(*Quietly.*)

I'll get your things ready for you. When will you leave?

HOOVER.

I can't go until the six o'clock.

MRS. HASTINGS.

All right. (*Exits right.*)

MONA *enters quickly, left.*

MONA.

(*Going to* HOOVER.)

Well, it is all good, eh? You get ze stock? We blow ze coop, eh, what? You tell ze old tabby cat ze one beeg joke?

HOOVER.

Oh, yes, I told her.

MONA.

When we go, eh?

HOOVER.

On the six o'clock.

MONA.

No sleep for me, it is so excite. To-morrow—non—to-day it ees. I shall be in la bonne city. To zis place (*blows kiss*), good night! Now you get ze stock, I get ze sealskin wrap, eh? (*Puts her arm through his.*)

HOOVER.

M a y b e you do.

MONA.

Maybee? Why you say maybee—(*Steps back and looks at him*)—so fonnee? You promise me ze sealskin. (*Indignantly.*)

HOOVER.

Well, I guess that's scratched, kid.

MONA.

Scratch? What you mean, scratch?

HOOVER.

Nothing doing on the sealskin.

MONA.

(*Aghast.*)

Nossing doing? You scratch ze sealskin? I scratch you. (*Getting excited.*)

HOOVER.

(*Uneasily.*)

Hold on; wait a minute.

MONA.

(*Hands on hips.*)

I hold on. I wait. Come across. (*Holds out hand, rubbing fingers together.*)

HOOVER.

The stock is all flooey.

MONA.

Flooee?

HOOVER.

Yes; no stock. I didn't get it. Vare wouldn't sell.

MONA.

(*Nonplussed.*)

No stock? What you—do now?

HOOVER.

(*Sourly.*)

Go to work, I guess.

MONA.

You have no monee?

HOOVER.

Of course I have—some.

MONA.

For ze sealskin?

HOOVER.

Nothing doing on the sealskin.

MONA.

You have monee to buy ze stock?

HOOVER.

Not enough. Mrs. Hastings was going to give me the rest.

MONA.

You are one poor man; what you call—bum.

HOOVER.

(*Putting his arm around her.*)

Now don't be mad, kid.

MRS. HASTINGS *enters right, sees them and shows surprise and anger.*

MRS. HASTINGS.

(*Coming center.*)

So—this is your game!

MONA.

(*Angrily.*)

What you mean, game? You sneer at me?

MRS. HASTINGS.

I don't blame you. You don't know this man.

MONA.

Oh! Do not know? *I* do not know zis man? Oh, it is to scream! (*Laughs.*)

MRS. HASTINGS.

I am engaged to marry him.

MONA.

You marree heem? *You* marree—*my* husban'? (*Laughs.*)

MRS. HASTINGS.

(*In amazement.*)

Your husband!

HOOVER.
(*Pretending indifference.*)
That's right. Mona's my wife.

MRS. HASTINGS.
(*Pauses in astonishment.*)
And you dared make love to me! You deceived me—

MONA.
(*Interrupting.*)
Oh, don't feel so bad. (*Shrugs shoulders.*) You can have heem.

HOOVER.
(*Angrily.*)
Where do you get that stuff!

MONA.
(*Indifferently.*)
I don' want heem. I have heem for six years. (*Shrugs shoulders.*) He ees no good. He deceive me. He say he soon have lots of mon*ee*, I shall have diamon'—sealskin. He one beeg bluff. I work. I earn my o w n sealskin. (*Hands on hips.*)

HOOVER.
Mona!

MONA.
(*Deliberately.*)
Oh, you mak' me seek! (*To* MRS. HASTINGS.) You take heem. I don' want heem.

MRS. HASTINGS.
(*Emphatically.*)
Neither do I.

MONA.
(*Laughing.*)
You poor man. You are not want'. You flooee.

MRS. HASTINGS.
(*To* HOOVER.)

Your clothes are packed. (*Turns quickly and exits, left.*)

MONA.

Take your clo'es and go. (*Laughs.*) No seal-skin—no Mona. (*Tauntingly blows a kiss to him, and exits, left.*)

HOOVER.

The little devil! (*Exits right.*)

DORA *runs on from left, followed by* DICKIE.

DORA.

Ithn't it too ecthiting for anything? I don't believe anybody will go to thleep to-night. (*Sits in big chair at right.*)

DICKIE.

Gee, I'm dying for a cigaret.

DORA.
(*With upraised forefinger.*)

Dickie, you promithed. Pleathe don't. That'th what they all do—promith, but never keep their word.

DICKIE.
(*Jealously.*)

All do? What do you mean, all?

DORA.

Why—Georgie, and—(*counts on fingers*)—Tubby—and Ned—and Freddie—and Jack—and—

DICKIE.
(*Smiling in chagrin.*)

Never mind, I'll take your word for the rest. Did they all fall as easily as I did?

DORA.

Oh, yeth. But it'th different with you, Dickie. (*Sentimentally.*) You are my ideal.

DICKIE.

The very latest pattern in ideals. (*Strikes attitude, and laughs.*) Doe, you're a mighty nice kid. Do you know it? (DORA *shyly nods her head yes.*) She does know it?

DORA.

(*Looking innocent.*)

They all tell me that.

DICKIE.

They do? Well, to show you that I do care—for your thake, I w i l l thtop thmoking thigaretth.

DORA.

(*Happily.*)

Dickie! You're a dear. Come, let uth go out on the veranda and watch the thun rithe. (*Crosses up right.*)

DICKIE.

(*Crossing up right.*)

Dora, do you object if I chew a little gum?

DORA.

(*Taking his arm and going with him.*)

Thtop being thilly!

(DICKIE *and* DORA, *laughing, exeunt together, right.*)

PETER *enters left, goes right, and sits in big chair.* VI *follows him.*

VI.

(*As she enters.*)

Peter, I swear! Good gracious—you've got me swearing and everything, and even then you're not

satisfied. Peter dear, I solemnly swear, by my cat's cuffs, I won't flirt the least little bit, cross my heart, liver and lights.

PETER.

(*Pessimistically.*)

Oh, you just kid about it.

VI.

No I don't, Petie. I mean it. And if anyone writes you that they saw Violet Vare going around with blinders on, you'll know I'm trying to make my eyes behave.

PETER.

(*Gruffly, to hide his embarrassment.*)

Well, here's the ring. (*Crosses to her, taking ring from pocket and awkwardly holding it out to her.*)

VI.

(*Thrilled.*)

Oh, Petie! (*Takes ring.*) I've seen this before —why (*suspiciously*), this is the ring Mabel Gray wore—

PETER.

(*Interrupts.*)

No, it isn't. I swapped that for this. (*Puts ring on* VI's *finger.*)

VI.

Isn't it peachy! Oh, I remember it now. It's the one Ruth Ray gave back to Teddy Arlington.

PETER.

Sure. I swapped the one Mabel gave back to me for this.

VI.

(*Delighted.*)

Oh, won't Mabel be wild!

PETER.

(*Wisely.*)

Guess she'll wish she hadn't broken our engagement.

VI.

It's a perfectly glorious ring; the prettiest one I ever had.

PETER.

(*Proudly.*)

It's the prettiest I ever gave any girl.

VI.

Petie, you're a darling, and I hope our engagement lasts a long time. Let's go out on the veranda and see the sun rise. (*Puts her arm through his and leads him up right.*)

PETER.

All right; may as well wait up for breakfast now.

VI.

Isn't it a thrilling experience!

PETER.

(*Affecting boredom.*)

Oh, I've had thrillinger ones.

VI.

Have you, Petie? Come on and tell me all about them.

(VI *and* PETER *exeunt, arm in arm, right.*)

MARGIE *enters, left, followed by* VARE *and* MRS. HASTINGS.

MARGIE.

(*Crossing right.*)

It's too bad, Mrs. Hastings, that you ever allowed yourself to be interested in such a man. (*Crosses right.*)

VARE.

(*Crossing right.*)

Yes, but we all make mistakes. You needn't leave here until you have found another place.

MARGIE.

You needn't go at all, for that matter.

MRS. HASTINGS.

(*Gratefully.*)

Thank you. I will stay and try to prove how much I appreciate your consideration. I don't know why I was led to do such a thing, or—why I—cared for him.

VARE.

When a woman is infatuated—er—

MARGIE.

(*Finishing it for him.*)

They say love is blind.

VARE.

(*Looking at* MARGIE.)

I believe it.

MARGIE.

Oh, don't look at me. I'm not as blind as I—seem to be. (*Smiles.*)

VARE.

Well, it's not the clothes that make the man.

MARGIE.

No, it isn't—when one loves.

MRS. HASTINGS.

(*Who has remained near left door.*)

I'll retire now, if I may.

VARE.

Certainly.

MRS. HASTINGS.
(*Starting to go.*)

Thank you.

VARE.
(*With a sudden thought.*)

Oh, Mrs. Hastings, please send Mona to me.

MRS. HASTINGS.

Yes, Mr. Vare. (*Exits left.*)

VARE.

Margie, aren't you going to bed?

MARGIE.
(*Brightly.*)

What's the use? May as well wait for breakfast now. Besides I have an engagement with Jerry to sit out on the veranda and see the sun rise.

VARE.
(*Shaking his head.*)

I can't make you out. Jerry is a good fellow; a splendid fellow. But Marjory, he is uncouth, a country clown, uneducated—

MARGIE.

I love him, dad. You know (*smiling*) clothes don't make the man.

MONA *enters, left.*

MONA.
(*To* VARE.)

You send for me? If you discharge me (*smiles*), I queet. I come to tell you I go as soon as ze daylight come.

VARE.
(*Crossing to table.*)

Are you leaving with your husband? (*Sits, takes out check book and fountain pen.*)

MONA.

My husban'—he go—flooee. He is—bad business man. I adore clevair men. My husban' is a beeg boob. I mus' lose heem.

VARE.

(*Writing check.*)

This will cover what I owe you. (*Gives* MONA *the check.*)

MONA.

Je vous remercie, Méestaire Vare. You will not geeve recommend, non? I shall not ask. It would be too fonnee. I weesh you a good morning. (*Laughs and exits left.*)

VARE.

Good-bye.

MARGIE.

Can you beat that?

VARE.

I cannot.

JANE *enters, left. She is radiating happiness.*

JANE.

Uncle—Margie—congratulate me. I am going to be married.

VARE.

(*Surprised.*)

What?

MARGIE.

(*Amazed.*)

Jane Harbison! Married?

JANE.

(*Calmly.*)

Yes, married. What is there so strange about that announcement?

MARGIE.

But you always said—

JANE.
(*Interrupting.*)
Yes, I know—but that was before I met Earnest.

MARGIE.
Earnest?

VARE.
Earnest?

JANE.
(*Nodding.*)
Earnest.

VARE.
You're not joking?

JANE.
Certainly not.

VARE.
You know nothing about him.

JANE.
Oh, yes I do.

MARGIE.
But your writing?

JANE.
I shall live my romance.

MARGIE.
(*Embracing her.*)
How perfectly ripping.

VARE.
(*Crossing to* JANE.)
I congratulate you, my dear, and sincerely hope you have chosen wisely. Earnest appears to be a very nice fellow. But wait a little while. Don't be in a hurry. Where is Earnest?

EARNEST *enters, left.*

JANE.
He's coming. (*Sees* EARNEST.) Earnest (*takes his hand*). I have told uncle and Margie.

EARNEST.

(*Crossing to* VARE.)

By jove! Really—ah—I should have come to you at once, sir—but Jane preferred to tell you herself, and—

VARE.

(*Meeting* EARNEST.)

I wish you every happiness, my boy. But think it over. (*Shakes* EARNEST's *hand.*)

JANE.

Uncle (*pause*). Am I such a risk that he must think it over?

MARGIE.

(*Laughs.*)

Oh, the idea.

EARNEST.

It isn't necessary to think it oveh, sir. I shall make Jane happy, because I shall devote myself to doing so. And I can take care of her as you would wish her to be taken care of. To-morrow—to-day, ratheh—I shall tell you more—ah—about myself.

VARE.

Very well, my boy.

MARGIE.

Jane.

JANE.

(*Who has crossed toward right door, stops.*)

Yes?

MARGIE.

How about the poor old world?

JANE.

The world? I don't understand.

MARGIE.

Where will it slip to, when you have ceased to "uplift"?

JANE.

We sha'n't forget the world—shall we, Earnest?

EARNEST.

Never—ah—that is, not all together. We shall not let it forget us entirely.

VARE.

That's good.

JANE.

Earnest?

EARNEST.

Yes, my deah.

JANE.

Let us go out on the veranda and see the sun rise.

(EARNEST *crosses quickly to* JANE, *and they exeunt arm in arm, right.*)

VARE.

Well, well. Will surprises never cease?

MARGIE.

(*Gayly.*)

It's been a great day, hasn't it, dad?

VARE.

I don't want many like it.

MARGIE.

(*Caressing* VARE'S *shoulder.*)

Dad, now honestly, isn't Jerry wonderful?

VARE.

Well, he has certainly changed this day for me. Indeed, he has changed my entire future.

MARGIE.

What time is it?

VARE.

(*Looks at his watch.*)

Five o'clock.

MARGIE.

(*Taking his arm.*)

A new day is dawning, dad.

VARE.

A new day has dawned for me, my dear.

MONA, *dressed for street and carrying handbag, enters left in time to hear him speak.*

MONA.

Ze day, he dawn; I am on my way.

VARE.

My girl—

MONA.

Oui, monsieur?

VARE.

How old are you?

MONA.

Oh, monsieur! You are not gallant. You ask ze lady his age. Oh!

VARE.

You seem very young to—

MONA.

(*Quickly.*)

To be marr*ee?* I was young when I marr*ee*, but I now am ol' enough to know. It ees a much plenty. I go back to Paree—to my mozaire. My husban', he is a beeg—what you call—"tin leezee"—a flivair.

MARGIE.

(*Laughing.*)

Oh, you funny little thing.

MONA.

It ees quite so, Meess Margie. I am fonnee. I laugh, ha-ha! Life, he ees—a bubble. Going up—up—zen—squash! (*Slaps hands together.*) We take ze air.

VARE.

(*Taking her hand.*)

Well, good-bye. I'm glad you are going home. You need your mother.

MONA.

My mozaire—he need me. You are ver' kind.

MARGIE.

(*Extending her hand.*)

Good-bye, Mona. I shall miss you, you are always so happy. (*Holds out hand.*)

MONA.

(*Sadly, as she takes* MARGIE'S *hand.*)

Ah, I know ze tear. He is always just behind ze laugh. (*Takes a deep breath.*) Adieu. (*Exits quickly, right.*)

MARGIE.

(*Looking after her.*)

Poor little thing.

VARE.

A strange little woman.

MARGIE.

Why didn't we keep her?

VARE.

No, this is no place for her.

MRS. HASTINGS *enters, left.*

MRS. HASTINGS.

Breakfast will be served in ten minutes, sir.

VARE.

Very well, Mrs. Hastings. Oh, Mrs. Hastings, did Mona have breakfast before she left?

MRS. HASTINGS.

Yes, sir.

VARE.

That's good.

MARGIE.

I'll call the folks when you ring.

MRS. HASTINGS.

Yes, miss. (*Exits left.*)

DORA *comes in the right door, followed by* DICKIE.

DORA.

Oh, I'm tho thleepy and hungry.

DICKIE.

Here too.

MARGIE.

Well, breakfast will soon be served.

VI *enters right.*

VI.

(*Yawning.*)

Oh, gosh. I've got to hit the hay pretty soon. I'm all in.

PETER *enters right.*

DICKIE.

Why, you slept all morning, Vi. Isn't it so, Pete?

PETER.

(*Crossly.*)

Oh, shut up.

DORA.

And Petie had hith armth around her in a thweet embrathe.

VI.

Yes, and Petie had to holler and wake me up.

PETER.

Well, your head was pressing my scarfpin into my chest. Anyone would holler.

(*All the others laugh.*)

VARE.

(*Amused.*)

Well, how was the sunrise?

DORA, PETER, VI *and* DICKIE.

(*All together.*)

Wonderful!

VI.

And Jane and Earnest engaged. Can you feature that?

DICKIE.

Some week-end!

DORA.

(*Shyly.*)

Mr. Vare, Dickie and I are engaged.

VARE.

Good Lord!

DORA.

(*Enthused.*)

Yeth, and he'th thtopped thmoking thigaretth becauthe mother detethtth thigaretth.

(*All laugh.*)

VARE.

(*Heartily.*)

Well, young folks, I wish you all joy. And I wish time could roll backward for me. But I'm as happy to-day as any old fellow of my age could expect to be.

JANE *and* EARNEST *enter right.*

ALL.

(*Together.*)

How did you enjoy the sunrise?

JANE *and* EARNEST.

(*Together.*)

Wonderful!

DICKIE.

Where's Jerry?

(*The following remarks, preceding* JERRY'S *entrance, are all spoken together, to cause just a moment of confused talk.*)

VARE.

That's so. Where is the boy?

DORA.

He theemth to have dithappeared.

MARGIE.

I can't imagine where he is.

VI.

Hasn't anybody seen him?

PETER.

Yes, where's Jerry?

JANE.

He isn't outside.

EARNEST.

Isn't he here?

As they are speaking JERRY *enters left, briskly. He has removed his rube wig and has changed his rustic costume for that of a snappy, up-to-the-minute, carefully dressed young college man.*

JERRY.

(*Gayly.*)

Here I am. (*Pauses and grins.*) Am I intruding?

ALL.

Jerry!

JERRY.

(*Smiling.*)

Sure.

VI.

It is Jerry!

DORA.

For pity thake!

PETER.

What's the idea?

VARE.

Jerry!

JANE.

Tell them, Jerry.

JERRY.

Forgive me for masquerading, Mr. Vare, but—

VARE.

I don't understand.

VI.

(*Impatiently.*)

Let him tell us.

DORA.

Ithn't he good looking!

MARGIE.

Hush!

JERRY.

I owe you an apology for this deception, Mr. Vare. I'll explain. You see, I was always bugs about acting.

MARGIE.

Oh!

DORA.

An actor!

VI.

Oh, gee!

VARE.

(*To them.*)

Be quiet! (*To* JERRY.) Go on, son.

JERRY.

Well—I was bound I was going into the movies.

VI.

(*Boisterously.*)

Oh, boy!

DORA.
(*Romantically.*)
Tho am I.

VARE.
(*To the girls.*)
Will you keep still?

JERRY.
Dad wouldn't listen to it.

VARE.
Certainly not.

VI.
Why not? It would be ripping.

JANE.
I think I shall write for the movies.

JERRY.
Dad wanted me to follow his business.

VARE.
What is his business, Jerry?

JERRY.
He's president of the Standard Electric Company.

VARE.
The million-dollar corporation?

JERRY.
That's dad.

VI.
(*With hand to forehead.*)
Good-night!

JERRY.
But I was set on being a movie actor.

PETER.
(*Inspired.*)
I think I'll be a movie actor.

VI.

(*With finality.*)

I think you won't.

JERRY.

(*To* VARE.)

Dad and I had a hot argument over it, and I had made up my mind to beat it for Los Angeles when your letter came.

VARE.

My letter? What had that to do with it?

JERRY.

You wrote dad that you were worried about an investment. You said—wait; I have your letter here. (*Takes out letter from pocket.*) It says (*reads*): "Although I can't accuse the fellow, still there is something suspicious about his actions regarding the stock. I feel there is something queer about the Bluebird Corporation affair and that they are trying to freeze out the stockholders, and that this fellow is their agent." Well, that letter gave me the big idea. I told father I would disguise myself as a green country boy to throw the fellow off his guard, come here and try to find out the truth about the stock.

JANE.

Wonderful!

VI.

As Mona would say, "some keed!"

DORA.

Ithn't it exthiting!

JERRY.

Well, dad laughed and said I couldn't get away with it. I was sure I could, and I told dad that if I failed or anyone discovered my disguise, I'd give up all idea of a career on the silver sheet. Dad's a

good old scout. He agreed. We shook hands on it. Then I beat it to the home of my college chum, my bosom pal, and told him of my plan. He was crazy to come, too. We were up in the air about a disguise or some excuse to ring him in. But when we reached the city we bought a paper, and there was an advertisement for a secretary.

(*Next three speeches are given together.*)

VI.

What?

DORA.

Merthy!

MARGIE.

Earnest?

JANE.

Earnest.

EARNEST.

(*Briskly.*)

Present! (*Steps out.*)

JERRY.

(*Grinning.*)

Earnie, take off the goggles. The scene's over.

(EARNEST *takes off his glasses, puts them in his pocket.*)

DICKIE.

(*Crosses to* EARNEST, *and shakes hands.*)

You got away with it, all right. (*Then crosscs and shakes hands with* JERRY.)

PETER.

(*Eagerly.*)

I'll say you did! (*Shakes hands with* EARNEST *and* JERRY.)

VI.

(*Dashing for* JERRY.)

Jerry, you're a d a r l i n g. (*Grabs a hand.*)

DORA.

(*Following* VI's *example.*)

It was w o n d e r f u l. (*Grabs his other hand.*)

JANE.

(*Crossing to* EARNEST, *and laughing.*)

I don't know whether I shall forgive you or not.

EARNEST.

(*Gayly.*)

You can't help it, Jane.

JANE.

(*Embracing him.*)

I know it.

ALL.

Oh!

JANE.

Allow me to announce my engagement.

DORA.

Oh, you detheitful thing! (*Rushes to* JANE, *and embraces her.*)

VI.

Old Wisenheimer! (*Rushes to* JANE, *embraces her.*)

VARE.

Well, Jerry, you've won your wager. So I suppose you will soon be a movie actor.

VI.

(*Waving her hand wildly.*)

Hurray, Jerry. Step on the gas, old kid!

VARE.

(*Sharply.*)

Vi! I'm surprised.

DORA.

A movie hero!

VARE.

Jerry, I owe you something; I must reward you. What shall I give you?

JERRY.

Mr. Vare, give me—Marjory.

VARE.

No! Not to a movie actor, Jerry.

MARGIE.

(*Crossing to* JERRY.)

I'm sorry dad, but—

JERRY.

Oh, but I've changed my mind. I'm going into business with father.

VARE.

(*Holds out hand, which* JERRY *takes.*)

My boy, I wish you every happiness.

JERRY.

(*Smiling.*)

Thank you, father-in-law.

VARE.

(*Laughs.*)

You put it over on me.

VI.

I'll say he did.

JERRY.

And I won a wife as the simple country boy.

MARGIE.

(*Mischievously.*)

Oh, no.

JERRY.

(*In surprise.*)

No?

MARGIE.
(*Slowly.*)
I knew you were in disguise—all the time.

(ALL *gather around* JERRY *and* MARGIE.)

JERRY.
You knew?

MARGIE.
Yes.

ALL.
How?

MARGIE.
(*To* JERRY.)
On the day you arrived, I saw your own hair under the red wig when we sat on the couch together.

VI.
Then Jerry loses, after all.

JERRY.
(*Embracing* MARGIE.)
No, I don't. I w i n!

ALL.
Oh! (*As he embraces* MARGIE.) Are we intruding?

(ALL *excepting* JERRY *and* MARGIE *turn backs to audience. Breakfast bell rings.*)

CURTAIN.

Fifty-Fifty

BY

FREDERICK G. JOHNSON

A FARCE of love, luck and laughter in 3 acts, by the author of "Mary's Millions"; 5 males, 5 females. Time, 2¼ hours. **Scenes:** 2 interiors, an attic studio and a bungalow.

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Mary Manners.....An Heiress to Millions

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"When I go after a side partner, she's going to be a live-wire lady. No corn-fed beauties for mine." "Say—honest—is there anybody in this one-horse town that has a million dollars?" "I've read books, I have, about them slick rascals from the city." "Waitin' for the mail? Looks more like waitin' for the female." "More city folks, I'll bet a doughnut." "I believe in sperrits, but I ain't seen none sense the country went dry." "Stop scratchin'! Ain't you got no company manners?" "He looks like a head waiter and he talks like a bottle of seltzer." "All foreign wild animals looks alike to me." "The greatest doin's since the mill dam busted." "What's been swiped an' who done it?" "Any clues? No, all genuine pearls." "She has chain lightning slowed down like the rural free delivery." "I foller the deeductive method. I don't take no clues off no Fiji board!" "Boy, I sure do hate to take you, but I reckon I got to." "Funny what a difference just a few millions make." "The third degree trimmed with hayseed." "Eudory, you say the durndest things!"

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